HINTS

ON THE

CULTURE OF CHARACTER

BY THE

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With Variety of Passages selected from the Writings of Eminent Divines, chiefly those of the present day.

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THE EDITOR TO THE READER.

FEW words are required to show the design entertained in the combination of Essays, Discourses, and passages of a Hortatory nature, which form this book. The title alone is perhaps sufficiently explanatory of the aim, to furnish a useful compendium of hints on the culture of "Character," using that word to denote the union of all elements which are noble and lovely in thought, habit, and endeavour. To define briefly the Christian character, we need only refer to the emphatic and comprehensive language of Holy Writ: * we find there the simple standard. In striving to reach the pitch of that excellence, every one has to contend with numerous and sore difficulties, ever varying in their nature and intensity of operation upon each individual. To indicate the chief of these hindrances to the formation and development of character in their most common and trying phases; to enumerate the best means of avoiding or overcoming them, according to the guidance of the Bible and the teaching of experience; to set forth plainly and forcibly the many encouragements which we have for perseverance in measures of self-examination and self-discipline; and

* Matt. xxii. 37–40. Luke x. 25–28. Phil. iv. 8.

to exhibit the lasting peace which results from a patient yet energetic antagonism to the evil that lurks within and without—such is the tendency of every line in this volume. To show, in short, the urgent necessity of instituting a vigilant scrutiny, steady and cheerful, of every thought, word, and deed, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."* If in the hands of youth, or those of riper age, this work shall in any instance assist in impressing a more profound and solemn sense of the need and the beauty of the Christian economy of daily life, then the pains which have been taken in its production shall not have been wasted.

The second aphorism of the *Novum Organum* is this.—"The unassisted hand, and the understanding left to itself, possess but little power. Effects are produced by the means of instruments and helps, which the understanding requires no less than the hand; and as instruments either promote or regulate the motion of the hand, so those that are applied to the mind prompt or protect the understanding." Whether the heart is to be touched and roused, or the understanding to be strung, the case is the same, the need the same, in things spiritual. That the book may be of some use for both purposes, is the hope of the writer, to whom its preparation has afforded equal delight and benefit.

When a man takes upon himself "the honourable style of a Christian," † several instruments are serviceable. It

* Eph. iv. 13. † Sir Thomas Browne.

is true, these are only to be viewed as auxiliaries to the Great Standard of Faith and Practice, all-sufficient in itself, if properly used. Abstractly, the Christian believes that all things work together for his good, but at every obstacle which checks his progress, or on the occurrence of every seeming disaster which blasts the hope of his fancied good, and tests the foundation of principle, then he requires help from the divine assurances, the testimonies of experience and the recollection of the real nature and end of many fascinations. Many hints in these pages are fitted for the culture of character on such occasions.

Some few there are who consider that they have no need for help—those who, according to the expression of an old author, think themselves so well furnished with spiritual knowledge, that if we come to offer them any assistance on the way, they will be apt enough to say, as Esau did of his brother Jacob's present, "I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself;" being all-confident of their spiritual, as the rich man in the Gospel was of his temporal estate. Happily these may be reckoned exceptional cases of short duration.

The chief use of the Preface to this book is to enable the Editor to fulfil a pleasant duty, that of acknowledging thankfully the great kindness of those distinguished men who have in several ways contributed to its pages. That kindness has enabled the Editor, in a succinct manner, to touch upon many springs of character examined from different points of view, and considered under various aspects. Treated by such authors, alike eminent for piety and ability, truth shall surely win an entrance to the mind and heart, or obtain at least a fair hearing, through

a recognition of the genius, talent, and learning which enforce its dictates? This may occur not unfrequently when simple earnestness would fail to secure attention, convince the intellect, or command the affections. Much shall have been gained if the aspirations and exhortations of so many gifted minds stir up the reader to a consciousness, more than passing, that

> "Life is real! Life is earnest!
> And the grave is not its goal!"

The Volume consists of two distinct parts. The first, consisting of four sections, is entirely original. The plan of the work, as regards its proposed divisions, having been communicated to the Divines to whom these sections are due, and whose names they bear, it fortunately met with their approbation, which was equivalent to securing their co-operation.

The second and larger part is devoted to Selections from the Writings of living Divines, with the exception of some thoughts from the remains of Heber, Arnold, &c. The wide surface over which the Editor gathered these passages in the course of reading, rendered a concurrence necessary on the part of the authors, for which thanks are due to the MOST REVEREND THE ARCHBISHOPS, THE RIGHT REVEREND THE BISHOPS, and THE REVEREND GENTLEMEN, who have so cordially granted permission to quote such portions of their works as bore upon the idea of this publication. Their names are attached to the respective compositions, and on a separate page a list is given of the whole; an asterisk being affixed in three

cases where, from the brevity of the passages printed, it was considered unnecessary to enter into communication with the authors. In making these Selections, care has been taken to make each fragment represent the author's idea as fairly and fully as possible.

In addition to its special purpose, this Volume may serve another of an indirect but not unimportant nature. Quaint old Fuller, in his "Abel Redivivus," asks, "What remains but condole the sad condition of our days, coming short of the former age and daily wayning? *thinness* in *eminent divines*." Perhaps such an idea of the present day is often lightly adopted. The assemblage of passages on Christian Nobleness here gathered together, may indicate the number and excellence of the materials which lie scattered about in modern theological, or semi-theological literature, unheeded, or imperfectly appreciated, if they sometimes happen to be contained in a book labelled "Sermons."

READER! "let not the word heaven be in our mouths only; let it be in our hearts. Let us do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven; and then we shall make it appear that the kingdom of God is come, that it is come unto us." *

To that end, "let us turn from shadows of all kinds—shadows of sense, or shadows of argument and disputation, or shadows addressed to our imagination and taste. Let us attempt, through God's grace, to advance and sanctify

* Dr John Worthington.

the inward man. We cannot be wrong here. Whatever is right, whatever is wrong, in this perplexing world, we must be right in doing justly, in loving mercy, in walking humbly with our God; in denying our wills, in ruling our tongues, in softening and sweetening our tempers, in mortifying our lusts; in learning patience, meekness, purity, forgiveness of injuries, and continuance in well-doing."

The truth of these fervent words of another is independent alike of their author or transcriber.

For, as Anthony Farindon saith, "the soul is then most herself, and comes nighest to her former estate, when, forgetting the weight and hindrance of the body, she enjoys herself, and takes wings, as it were, and soars up, in the contemplation of God and his goodness; 'when she begins to be that which she must needs believe herself to be,' of a celestial and heavenly beginning."

J. H.

LIST OF AUTHORS FROM WHOSE WORKS SELECTIONS HAVE BEEN MADE.

The Most Reverend the ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. [SUMNER.]
The Most Reverend the ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN. [WHATELY.]
The Right Reverend the BISHOP OF LONDON. [BLOMFIELD.]
The Right Reverend the BISHOP OF HEREFORD. [HAMPDEN.]
The Right Reverend the BISHOP OF OXFORD. [WILBERFORCE.]
The Right Reverend the BISHOP OF ST DAVID'S. [THIRLWALL.]
The Right Reverend the BISHOP OF ST ANDREW'S. ("*Christian Boyhood at a Public School*") [WORDSWORTH.]
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Rev. HENRY HART MILMAN, D.D., Dean of St Paul's.
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CONTENTS.

PART I.

PART II.

SELECTIONS FROM THE WORKS OF DIVINES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

The Aim of Life, and the Choice of a Religion.

CHAPTER II.

Common Dangers and Difficulties.

CHAPTER III.

On Manner and Motives.

CHAPTER IV.

On Prayer.

CHAPTER V.

On Books and the Bible.

CHAPTER VI.

On Self-Examination.

CHAPTER VII.

The Christian in the World

CHAPTER VIII.

On Discipline and Troubles.

CHAPTER IX.

On the Disposition and Learning needed in our Time.

CHAPTER X.

On Spirituality and its Manifestations.



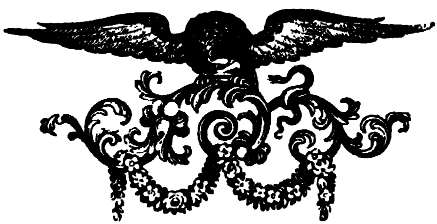
THE

CULTIVATION OF THE INTELLECT:

A Divine Duty of Man.

BY THE REV. GEORGE CROLY, LL.D.,

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THE CULTIVATION OF THE INTELLECT A DIVINE DUTY OF MAN.

"GOD IS LOVE!" This is the inspired definition of the Almighty; and its proof is given, in his provision for universal happiness!

Every living creature is gifted with faculties for enjoyment. But man, intended for a higher existence, has faculties capable of a higher expansion, of a more general use, and of a more exquisite enjoyment. All living creatures, from the zoophyte and the insect, have intelligence; as is observable in their contrivances for obtaining food and avoiding danger. But there is still a gradation. In the lowest classes their necessities appear to be the limit of their intelligence. In the ascending ranks, there are additional uses of intelligence, to meet the greater difficulties of

providing food, and the greater dangers of their existence. A new faculty is opened, in the provision for their young, and in their services to man.

But, the intelligence of man is in advance of them all. He is the *only* creature on the globe who has the power of invigorating his intellect, of acquiring knowledge from experience, of pursuing knowledge for its own sake, of deriving knowledge from the past, and of rend ring the possession of knowledge an enjoyment. He has a still more distinguishing faculty—the Moral Sense: the most ennobling of all faculties, the elevation of almost every act of his life into an act of duty, gratitude, and homage to the Lord of all.

The three operations of the mind, in connection with knowledge—the desire of its possession, the tendency to its communication, and the power of its inheritance—are evidently the *exclusive* property of man. One generation of the lower animals follows another, without the slightest evidence of progress. No change of condition, climate, or

teaching, makes any discoverable difference in their capabilities of knowledge. But, man is capable of continual progress. He no sooner emerges from the hardships of savage life, than he feels an impulse to the acquisition of knowledge, discovers its necessity, and delights in its enjoyment. With the more vigorous order of minds this enjoyment amounts to a passion. To the scholar and the philosopher, all the other pursuits of the world seem almost trifling, and all the other pleasures grow pale. The recollections of antiquity, and the discoveries of science, are among the most absorbing, exhaustless, and elevating delights of human nature.

The COMMUNICATION OF KNOWLEDGE is an exclusive power of man, and is among the most striking instances of the simplicity of providential means, contrasted with the magnitude of providential purposes. It makes all knowledge a common property, and it makes every land the immediate depository of the intellectual wealth of every other. This universal diffusion re-acts on individual effort. A phenomenon of nature at

the Antipodes; a comet, visible only in a remote belt of the hemisphere; the discovery of an important mineral in a foreign mine, or a medicinal plant in an Eastern forest; the disturbance of magnetism at the line, or its disappearance at the pole; the track of a new planet in the clear atmosphere of the South, which could never have been seen in our clouded sky—all are known to the philosopher in his study, as suddenly and as amply, as if he had lived on the mountain-top, or in the mine, or made a pilgrimage to the forest, or circumnavigated the globe! The philosopher is thus stimulated by the general knowledge, is furnished with the facts of all, and, with his casual errors corrected, and his path cleared, is urged forward to the new investigation of nature.

Another great quality is the INHERITANCE OF KNOWLEDGE; the power of transmitting knowledge from generation to generation. On this depends the whole *progress* of man. Conceive him planted on the earth, knowing nothing of the past; no vigour of intellect could raise him above the rank of a vigorous barbarian. His whole ex-

istence must be experimental. "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof." He goes down to his grave, still a novice in all that constitutes civilisation. "He dies, and makes no sign." He leaves no bequest to society. However he may have cultivated the intellectual field in which he first stood, it is instantly covered with the thistle and the thorn, when his husbandry is over: to be laboured with the same toil by his successors, and by them, again, to be left to the thistle and the thorn.

What is a library? A collection of volumes? No; a collection of minds! The great men of their generations have gone down to the tomb, but all that made them great is still before us. *There* still lives the orator, the statesman, the man of taste, the man of social power, the man of science, the man of imagination. We are surrounded by talent, in all the forms which once influenced, enlightened, or delighted mankind: spirits speaking to our spirit, freed from the flesh, and purified by the grave.

The value of this quality is incalculable. It

makes the living man an associate of all the past, and a benefactor to all the future. Instead of the brief knowledge, which alone can be acquired in the rapid course of individual life, it makes him master of the mental treasures of six thousand years.

But, the cultivation of knowledge acts on a still broader scale, with more evident results, and with a loftier purpose. The Almighty has willed society, as the great field for the improvement of man; He has formed society into nations, for their more vigorous exercise in all the ways of improvement; and He has made that improvement the condition of their prosperity. A nation may exist without improvement, it may even rise to power by a barbaric energy, but it either disappears, or it stagnates; it is enslaved, or it returns to barbarism. It has failed in its duty, and has forfeited its privilege: like the fallow, it has returned to the swamp and the sand. No nation has ever risen to more than ephemeral power, which did not expressly contribute its share to the progress of knowledge. This fact is substan-

tiated by the history of all the successive masters of empire.

In them all there was an express organisation for knowledge, or an express impulse of authority for its influence on the general mind.

We first look to the divine model, in the "chosen people." In Palestine, the education of the multitude in the history, the law, and the religion, was an inspired command. To execute that command, appears to have been the office of the priesthood and the Levites, amounting to 30,000. When the calamities of Israel enfeebled this organisation, a new race of instructors was raised in "the schools of the prophets;" when those were extinguished by the Captivity, the well-known Sanhedrin, and the Scribes and Pharisees, still sustained the popular knowledge.

In the Babylonian Empire, a body of men, learned in all the knowledge of their time, were established, in direct connection with the throne. They were royal officials, evidently consulted on occasions connected with the state. And though a portion of their purpose was astrology and the

interpretation of dreams, and the name of Magi subsequently degenerated into imposture, it cannot be doubted, that a body headed by the most illustrious man of the Captivity, the inspired Daniel, must have had nobler objects, and encouraged the propagation of true science in the empire.

In Egypt, the priesthood formed a great incorporation of knowledge, whether original, or derived from India. The remnants of their science, found in the catacombs and temples, still astonish our inquirers; but their history, as derived from the Books of Moses, lays claim to secrets, hitherto insoluble by man. In the beginning, probably servants of the Almighty, they had evidently degenerated into the ministers of heathenism, and thus became masters of means of which we have no conception. The Mosaic history unquestionably attributes to them the power of working Satanic miracles, though those miracles gave way to the higher commission of Moses and Aaron.

Persia possessed a school of science, physical and moral, which, under various heads, continued

down to the period of Christianity; and which, though mingled with much superstition and much ignorance, yet was thought worthy of a revelation, and that revelation made by a miracle, the phénomenon of a star, or glory, sent to tell them of the birth, and to guide them to the cradle, of our Lord!

Greece, the most memorable cultivator of the mind, was almost one great school of every acquirement which could enlarge the human faculties. Nine leading sects of philosophy kept the national intellect in perpetual animation. All the arts followed in the train of this intellectual vigour; even war became a science. Every object of national power was moulded into the shape of national knowledge; and, when at last that light was extinguished, the memory of her intellectual achievements still rested on the mind of nations, and the march of Europe from the darkness of a thousand years began at her grave!

It is equally remarkable, that the decline of once celebrated nations began with their neglect of mental cultivation.

What broke down the Roman Empire, but the decay of popular spirit, consequent on the decay of popular knowledge? The sun of Rome set in the republic; the Augustan age was only the reflection of its setting. The despotism of the empire extinguished Roman literature. Men of genius ventured on that dangerous field no more, or disdained to struggle for the fame, which was to be given only from the lip of a tyrant. The people were reduced into clamourers "for bread and the games." Thus, the foundations of the state were shattered, long before the catastrophe of the empire came. The barbarian invasions were only the rush of a torrent against the structure already tottering to its fall. Literature was the spirit of Rome; when it vanished, the empire was a corpse, and might be left to the common operation of decay.

Arabia, a thousand years ago, threatened the conquest of the world. A new religion, a new literature, and a new vision of knowledge, had given sudden animation to the people. The Arab, hitherto lingering out existence in the monotony

of half-savage life, suddenly became the poet, the historian, and the philosopher, and from those, became the invincible warrior. Within a hundred years, the men who had emerged from the desert, a race of famishing robbers, sat on thrones in the East and the West, the men of power, of chivalry, and of refinement. At length, in the luxuries of conquest and the feuds of palaces, the Arab abandoned the pursuit of knowledge. This spell was instantly dissolved; the magic palace sank into the sand; the Arab was once more a robber, in a tent, and that tent in the wilderness.

China, with a civilised and abundant population, while Europe was a forest; with a systematic agriculture, while the rest of the world fed on roots and acorns; an empire, while all other nations were wandering hordes; and possessing, by the most extraordinary powers of invention, if not by direct revelation, the chief arts which have given later times the mastery of nature—China, the great cultivator of natural and scientific knowledge, stopped in that cultivation, a thousand years ago. But, from the moment in which she relin-

quished knowledge, she relinquished empire. The national spirit perished, and a Tartar invasion subverted the native throne.

China still retains a mockery of science, and a mockery of power. But, safe only by seclusion, that barrier is now broken down. European arts must overwhelm the feeble rivalry of obsolete contrivances. Living only by traffic, and governed only by tyranny, torn up by insurrection, and dependent for her throne only on the policy of Europe, she must pay the penalty of ignorance, in the separation of empire.

Africa is still the more signal example. With great bounties of nature, an exuberant soil, an overflowing population, mineral wealth inexhaustible, and with large opportunities of civilised intercourse, she has been always degraded, miserable, and enslaved. What more direct reason can be found for this anomaly in the history of mankind, than her stubborn neglect of knowledge? Her northern border, successively civilised by the Phœnician, the Roman, and the Christian settlements of the Lower Empire, has been only a slight

exception to her general darkness. The land of ignorance, she has been always the land of suffering; from age to age she has been the drudge of mankind, because she has been the outcast of civilisation; blind, because she would not open her eyes to the light; weak, because she would not refresh herself at the fount in which lives the health of nations; and consigned to the perpetual dungeon, because she would not welcome the angel, that alone could break her chains.

What then is the obvious nature of that knowledge, which alone can raise the general faculty of national intelligence? It is not the computation of facts, but the creation of principles; not the burdening of the memory, but the strengthening of the mind; not the harness of the warrior, but the skill and sinew which make him master of his weapons; not mere learning, which may be the possession of the pedant, but the power of assimilating that learning into the material of the understanding. The world is moving on; the nation which stands still must be left behind. No people can now live upon its remembrances.

Like the runners in the ancient games, the nation which surrenders its torch to another, not merely loses the race, but loses the light. The whole distinction of English intellect has arisen, from its continually looking forward: forgetting the past, and continually anticipating a new day of toils and of triumphs, of severer struggles, but of loftier splendours.

The GREAT INSTRUMENTS of this knowledge are, history, science, poetry, the philosophy of morals, the policy of nations, and, first, midst, and last of all, RELIGION; comprehending the conduct of life, the sensitiveness of conscience, the elevation of our nature, and the truths of the world to come.

The HISTORY of his own country ought to be the study of every man, but the History of England ought to be the study of all men. Despotism defaces the mass of mankind; the sullen compression of tyranny degrades all character to one level, and extinguishes the nobler features of our moral nature. With despotism there is neither hill nor valley. The freedom of our country, the power of the Reformation, the vigour of the national tem-

perament, and the consequent struggles for public liberty, have laid open, in England, all the secrets of national power. The Constitution is a volume ready for the hands of all mankind. The power of a national will, forcing its way through all obstacles, has never been so graphically described, as in English annals. Popery, which is despotism in its darkest shape, still stands between the foreigner and freedom: the monastery can never be the school of the patriot. If the foreigner is ever to be free, the History of England must be the oracle of the world.

The histories of the ancient nations have but in two instances acquainted posterity with man. The republics of Greece and Rome exhibit all his good and all his evil, with the vividness of a living presence; but they are like landscapes seen by lightning: if their splendour is startling, their darkness is fearful; all is alternately dazzling and desperate—a mixture of noble qualities with ferocious passions, a raging sea, phosphoric with its own violence. The republicanism of Greece was a splendid paroxysm; the republicanism of

Rome a splendid tumult: both finally exhausted by their own political profligacy; both hurried to the scaffold without a struggle; and both buried under a despotism, from which their spirit never rose again.

The whole argument is this—the Creator, in his beneficence, has furnished man with faculties essential to his advance; he demands an account of their exercise. When they are neglected, the nation falls into decay; when they are fostered, the nation goes on from strength to strength. Therefore, as at once a matter of duty to the great Giver, and a source of prosperity to the nation, governments should apply their whole effort to the training of the national mind.

It is a further proof of the divine *beneficence*, that those faculties are not required, to meet the actual necessities of our nature. Nations have lived without them; the African and the Esquimaux feel no want of them. They are of the class of luxuries. Man can feed, and fight, and traffic, and die, without them. But, without them, he abandons all the privileges of a being made for

endless progression. He differs in nothing from the ox or the ass, but in his greater capacity of wretchedness. He cannot rise beyond the rudest wants of nature. Torn as Europe has been by the ambition of governments and wars of aggrandisement, how much deeper must be the agonies of lands, tortured by a perpetual slave-trade, or exposed to the capricious brigandage of the neighbouring clans of barbarism. Age after age only heaps the dying upon the dead, builds only for ruin, prepares a population only for massacre. The barbarian cannot bring the past in aid of the present, cannot ascend a step in civilisation, on the stone laid by the generation gone; he has virtually no ancestors, and can have no posterity. The Red Man of the West is, at this moment, the same solitary, fierce, and miserable being, that he was a thousand years ago. The Mongol is the same wild, marauding, and miserable being, as when he followed the trumpets of Tamerlane!

Science, in its deeper sense, is too difficult for the multitude; but its conclusions may be given, without toiling in its mysteries. To know the

powers of the elements in which we live; to look upon nature with some sense of her action; to contemplate her wonders with the reverence due to their immensity; and, through all, to raise the heart to the majesty of Him, by whom all this accumulation of wonders was made, must be at once an important lesson to our humility, and a solemn summons to our gratitude. "To know God," says Newton, in the preface to his "Principia," "is the true object of natural philosophy."

POETRY, often the mere sport of the mind, is entitled to lay claim to a nobler mission. In its loftier flights, there is no power of the human mind which takes a wider range, or ascends beyond the trivialities of life with a more commanding pinion. But slightly connected with the necessities of the human career, yet, capable of an interest alike in all the bolder and finer interests of the human sensibilities, it is alternately the play of fancy, and the power of passion. It is human nature in its luxurious indulgence, or in its sternest excitement, language in its richest music, or in its nearest approach to inspiration. If there is

a human faculty allied to the faculties of other worlds, poetry seems to give the nearest idea of that alliance. It is an intellectual *creation*. Thus, in the "Iliad" we have a succession of imaginary characters, in whom we take an interest, almost as vivid as if they stood before us " in their armour as they lived." The life-giving power of the great dramatists of Greece and England absolutely compels the mind into a temporary conviction of the existence of their heroes; we involuntarily accept the illusion for a reality; and with every evidence that the whole is an illusion, surrender our hearts and our understandings to the magician.

But, the mightiest rank of poetry is to be found in Scripture. In all the difficulties of a language unspoken for two thousand years, and in the total loss of its harmony, the prophets of Israel still astonish mankind by the intensity of their conceptions. We can well comprehend how kings trembled before their presence; and how nations felt their rebuke. Their accumulation of imagery is unequalled. Always grand, yet always simple; al-

ways imaginative, yet always true to nature; never lingering on the loveliness of description, but always hurrying onward with their solemn task; always surrounded with the grandeur of mystery, yet always striking visibly at the object of their mission:—their true emblem is the thunderbolt, issuing from its cloud charged with the divine wrath, and irresistible by man; or the cataract, suddenly let loose from its mountain-top, and sweeping away the palaces and harvests of the plain; or those beings who administer the divine vengeance among men, glorious in beauty, but terrible in power. This language is true, or only false, in its failure to express the whole truth. If a man should desire to attain the highest conception of intellectual power, let him open a chapter of Isaiah, or Ezekiel.

MORALITY is the philosophy of human action; the history of the rules, impulses, and objects of virtue. It was the earliest of all studies, for the reason, that it was the most necessary. The first associations of man must have felt the necessity of truth, the importance of a respect for property,

and the general duty of guarding the community from civil disturbance and foreign rapine. It has been remarked, that morality differs from all other sciences, by its having no discoveries. The reason is, that it requires none; its discoveries were the primal necessities of human nature.

Still, the distinction of vice and virtue, the nature of the supreme God, the rights of human-kind, and the foundations of right and wrong, have formed the study of the most profound masters of the mind. Since the days of the greatest of all moralists, Solomon, Israel was the fount of philosophy.

POLITY, or the principles of government, is a branch of the knowledge essential to a people. Next to a pure religion, the greatest boon of Providence is a pure liberty. The English Constitution is the theory of a pure liberty, embracing the three indispensable principles—the security of person, the security of property, and the security of conscience. Polity, as a science, is of the first necessity to the education of the Englishman.

THEOLOGY is the science of religion; for religion

has all the characters of a science. It has the principles, the conclusions, the difficulties, and discoveries of a science. But, in the Scriptures, it does not assume a systematic form; evidently, because its purpose was less to instruct the understanding than to impress the heart. There it is a continued teaching, not by dogmas, but by examples—a succession of precepts illustrated by conduct; and its language is suitable to that purpose. More the language of persuasion than of authority; of a parent than a ruler; of a patient, persevering, and long-suffering Redeemer, than of an awful, strict, and unanswerable Judge. But can it be necessary to urge on men the acquisition of a knowledge, to which all other must be trivial, perhaps the only knowledge which will follow us beyond the grave! the great instructor in the things of eternity; the light divinely given to lighten our darkness here; a ray of that glory which shall invest the risen spirit; the guide, pledge, and promise of happiness, for ever and ever.

In those views of the general importance of

knowledge, I have regarded its whole object as the elevation of human nature; as a gift, additional to the power of meeting the mere necessities of human existence; as a golden chain between earth and the divine throne; as the exercise of incipient faculties, which shall find their expansion beyond the tomb; as the vision of the patriarch in the wilderness, though but in a dream, showing the shapes and splendours of heaven!

CHRISTIAN BEARING

At Home and in Society.

BY

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CHRISTIAN BEARING

AT HOME AND IN SOCIETY.

THE extreme importance of home religion can scarcely be over-estimated. We are often accustomed to speak of the great Christian duties, and we associate with that expression the idea of great benevolence, the giving of our influence to the support of the great Christian societies, and the regular attendance at the house of God and on his Sacramental ordinances, and perhaps we add to this, the abstaining from those scenes of acknowledged worldly amusement which are so attractive to the less thoughtful of our fellow-creatures. But how little does this really manifest that the "root of the matter" is in us. How many may do all this, and more too, and yet perish everlastingly, let every candid student of

the Scriptures declare. It has often been said, Charity should begin at home, though it should not end there. I am sure I may very safely add, Piety should begin at home, and I am certain it *will* not end there. The converse, however, cannot be so easily affirmed. There may be many public deeds which to the eye of man would assume the character of acts of charity and piety, but which do not proclaim that the heart is right with God. The man in public is not always the same man in private; but the good man, the Christian man in private, will be the Christian man in public.

In training souls for heaven, it becomes of the first importance that religion in the family and the social circle should be most carefully insisted upon. Such training will prove the best preparation for public usefulness, not only in a Christian point of view, but also in the body politic. Confidence in the character of our public men is one of the greatest safeguards of our country. Though there are many bright examples of men strictly upright, of whose religious principles it is

impossible to speak in praise, yet none are so sure to be found pure and upright as those who live in the habitual fear of God. And none can be said to live habitually in the fear of the Lord, whose private life does not manifest a sense of the existence of the all-seeing eye of God. It is in private life, I repeat, that we know the real character of the man. What the playground is to the schoolboy, that home is to the man.

Men make more mistakes concerning themselves, and more mistakes are made concerning them by others, from overlooking what I may call the *home test*, than from any other cause whatever.

The home test is concerned more or less with every feature of the divine image. The truth as it is in Jesus must be clearly defined, and clearly appreciated too, by those who would be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. For any action to be acceptable unto God, it is requisite that the end should be good, the means lawful, the motive Christian. No motive can be called Christian, that is unconnected, and that directly, with the

love of Christ. The love of Christ cannot be appreciated by any experimentally unacquainted with the leading doctrines of the gospel. Thus, as the way to reformation of life is the gospel, so the great means of guarding against sin is the gospel also. To the recipient of good at the hand of others, to him who benefits by the works of others, it makes but little difference whether the motive of the benefactor be good or evil. But to the benefactor himself the motive makes the greatest difference. If, therefore, the life is to be Christian at home and abroad, we must, by God's grace, seek to implant that Christian principle which makes a man do the commonest things from the highest motives: according to the apostolic injunction—"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

There is implied also in home religion the existence of an enlightened conscience; by which is meant a wise judgment which will approve things that are excellent. A man may act conscientiously who may not act piously, though no

man can act piously who does not act conscientiously. A conscientious Saul, in persecuting the followers of Christ, thought he did God service; but the enlightened Paul felt that such conduct was murder and blasphemy. There are a thousand things in every-day life which are connected with an enlightened conscience: our own walk before God, and our estimate of others, cannot be rightly regulated, without the mind is duly taught, I may say, without the judgment is based upon the written Word of God—that Word interpreted by itself. But when scriptural doctrine is held, when the conscience is duly enlightened, then you will find that decision of character, the exhibition of which makes the man of God consistent at home, useful abroad, and a blessing to a country at large.

No one doubts that the eye of a stranger puts a great restraint upon a man. It is to this we must attribute the difference of conduct in the same man when at home, surrounded by his own immediate family only, and in society, when surrounded by superiors or contemporaries, un-

connected by those ties of relationship which limit the family circle. But what a wretched motive is the presence of a stranger, in the judgment of any Christian, compared with the sense of the Divine presence. Now the habitual sense of the Divine presence will promote that home religion, which never fails to produce self-restraint. Any one who has watched the working within his own breast, must be aware that self-indulgence is the tendency of the human heart; not so much indulgence in the mere sensual or luxurious enjoyments of the body, as in the giving way to the impulses of the moment without the slightest consideration of the feelings of others. But home religion will modify, if not entirely correct, this tendency, which is altogether unworthy of those who profess to consider, not every man his own, but every man another's wealth.

Purity of heart is also another element essential to any right Christian feeling, the absence of which will at once mar all pretence to home religion. No man has a right, in the bosom of his family, to express by word or look that which

would not be tolerated in the society of the moral and well-behaved company of the world. Let this purity be wanting in the home circle, and a stain is left on the whole Christian character, which the morality demanded by the world, and essential to the maintenance of a common character for decency, can never efface.

Moreover, there will be in home religion that kindliness of feeling towards the young, and towards inferiors, especially those in the position of domestic servants, which is essential to the happiness of all, and the well conducting of the whole establishment. Much harm is done by men forgetting they have been boys; by the strong forgetting they have been weak. It is this which has in so many minds associated the ideas of gloom and harshness with religion. True piety is so essentially connected with the spirit of love, that it will show itself in bearing with, not the worldly frivolities, but the extreme joyousness of youth. In the home where such scriptural piety exists, no attempt will be made to keep up the same continued tension in the bow; no endeavour

will be used to draw forth the language of deep Christian experience from the lips of those who have scarcely learned to lisp their simplest prayers to their heavenly Father. Perfection will not be expected in the servant, which is never expected to be found in the master. Orders will not be given in a tone of voice which betrays the notion that the feelings of master and servant are entirely of a different order. Accidents will not be treated as gross acts of negligence; and the guilt of negligence itself will not be estimated by the consequences which ensue. There is very much of human nature, but there is very little Christian judgment and feeling, in the well-known distinction drawn by the owner of a horse, who usually says, "My servant threw him down;" "my friend let my horse fall;" but "the brute fell down with *me*." The estimate formed by the man of self-restraint, by the man under the influence of home religion, will very materially differ from that of the world upon matters exactly alike,—the one yielding to the impulse of the moment, the other in patience possessing his soul.

There is only one other point which I would notice, in describing the effects of home religion, and that is, the marked distinction it causes between the gentleman by birth only, and the gentleman who is under the influence of divine grace. No doubt courtesy often, I may say always, marks the demeanour of one gentleman towards another, but many, perhaps, overlook the fact, that courtesy is a Christian duty, the absence of which is a flaw, and a great flaw, in the Christian character. In their courtesy, the mere gentleman and the Christian gentleman will materially differ. The one will frequently allow his courteous demeanour to depend entirely upon the circumstances in which he is placed; with the other it is a matter of principle. With the one it will degenerate into flattery towards a superior, even though accompanied by easy familiarity, and a patronising compassion towards an inferior, though no expression be used which can justly be condemned; with the other there will never be found that wretched lying system of flattery, while there will be the respect felt and shown which Scripture itself claims

for our superiors in rank or age, and in conduct towards inferiors there will be that nice sense of consideration for their feelings, which will never allow of their being constantly reminded of obligations conferred.

But it is in matters of more importance that the distinction referred to will be more plainly manifested. Good taste, good tact, gentlemanlike feeling, it is often said, renders it impossible to point out to our friends any fault of which they may be guilty; that, if the society of the worldly or "the less strict" is not approved of, it can be left; but such a violation of the rules of society as an open denunciation of sin, is intolerable. What does all this verbiage really mean? It means neither more nor less than that it is better that sin should be allowed, God dishonoured, and our friend's soul endangered, than that the artificial forms and fashions of society should be violated. This, at least, was not the line of conduct adopted by Him who has left us an example that we should follow His steps; and the Christian gentleman will not forget the Christian in the gentle-

man, but speaking the truth in love, will raise his voice against sin, and will exert himself to forward the best interests of man and the glory of his God. He will so speak as to endeavour to check the evil, even if he be unable to establish the good. He will do it not in a way in which he can insure carrying with him at the moment the good wishes of all his hearers, but in such a manner as is consistent with the Word of God, which says that we should aim at being blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom, as Christians, we are to shine as lights in the world.

Hitherto reference has been kept carefully to what the Christian at home and in company *is*, as distinguished from the mere man of the world. It may be well now to offer a few remarks upon what the Christian man ought to aim at, in order that he may secure the maintenance of that healthy state of soul by which he may adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour. To treat this fully, would of course require a very large space, and would

occupy far more time than such a sketch as this pretends to be could possibly allow. It is proposed, therefore, briefly to show what the true Christian ought to appear, and in the next place, how this appearance may be attained and secured.

The religious man, in common with the rest of the sons of Adam, is destined to labour to get his own living. He may, humanly speaking, in some few cases be his own master, or, in other words, a man of independent property, notwithstanding the lamentable truth asserted by the apostle, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. The vast majority of mankind, whether making a great profession of religion or not, are engaged in some active employment. To females more especially belong duties at home, but all have some engagements. Now, the Christian should recollect that he stands at the same work, but on a very different platform from the man of the world. The one has his own character to maintain—he professes no more. The other has the

character of his religion, the honour of his Divine Master, to maintain. He works for nothing less. He not only assents to the worldly maxim, that whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well, but he feels that what he does he must do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, for he serves the Lord Christ. The result of this is, that idleness, carelessness, and indifference are banished. He is afraid, even if no stronger term be employed —he is afraid lest, being contented with indifferent success in his labours, he should give cause to any one to say, "This comes of your religion. Give me a good workman, and let religion take care of itself." Many a man has brought disgrace on his profession, by not aiming at this diligence in his worldly occupations. His occupations may be simply for the maintenance of his own family; they may be of a high intellectual order, or they may be merely of a manual kind, but the principle remains the same: whatever his hand finds to do, he must do with his might. It is true, business, or the pursuit of wealth, or of any other worldly object, must not usurp the throne which should be

occupied by the Most High, nor can they do so, if they are pursued as before the Lord, and for the furtherance of His glory. It is no answer to this, that any miser or any hypocrite may deceive himself, or attempt to deceive others, with the belief that he is serving the Lord, when he is specially serving himself. There is no truth which has not its abuse; nothing real which has not its counterfeit; no blessing which may not be found a curse. The Christian duty, however, cannot be ignored, that we are to study to do our own business. The Christian professor will aim at this diligence, that men, hearing his principles and seeing his good works, may glorify his Father which is in heaven.

Connected closely with this zeal and desire of excellence is the conscientious observance of God's will, in all things, at all times, and in all places. He must never sanction the idea which prevails in some quarters, that a man may have a public and a private conscience—a conscience for business, and a conscience for home. If this were allowed, such is the tendency to evil in the human heart,

and such is the power of evil to leaven what is good, that home religion would very speedily suffer. One set of balances will be kept—the balances of the sanctuary; by them will every action be weighed. He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

Passing from these public acts, which have been mentioned only because of their indirect influence upon the heart itself, and because of their direct influence upon the force of example, we may dwell upon the care to be taken in common conversation. This may assume either the argumentative or the playful form. In either case, the Christian must seek to bear in mind the words of St James:—"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth."

These two different views may be taken in their order. In argument, with all the outward restraints which difference of station, slight acquaintanceship, and the presence of others may

afford, it is no easy matter to keep an even temper. It need not be said that this difficulty is increased in many ways by the absence of such restraints in the family circle, and yet the frequent loss of temper is, perhaps, one of the greatest hindrances to personal piety and personal usefulness which can very easily be named. The Christian must aim at patience in argument. The absence of this Christian grace is the destruction of peace—the promotion of discord—the extinction of love—the cause of fear—a check to private communion with God—and the most powerful barrier to all the benefits which flow from family worship.

In conversation of a lighter and a more playful character, it is very easy, almost imperceptibly, to glide from the harmless to the mischievous. The Christian will, therefore, be very watchful, lest "the little member" which boasts great things should lead into sins the extent of which it is impossible to define. One thing, however, he steadily sets himself against, and that is laughing at sin. It is quite clear that laughing at sin is sin-

ful laughing. Others are encouraged to add sin to sin, that in their laughter peal may follow peal. The sin of grieving the Holy Ghost is undoubtedly incurred. The penalty paid for sin is overlooked, and a false idea of the sinfulness of sin is engendered. Few persons, it is to be feared, have attempted accurately to define the Saviour's meaning when he said, "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof on the day of judgment."

It is not to be supposed that we are forbidden ever to speak of subjects which are not religious; such an idea would be a great perversion of Scripture, and if maintained by any sincere though mistaken zealot, would be calculated to throw a grievous obstacle in the way of men's conversion to God. "Let your speech," said the apostle, "be always with grace, seasoned with salt." The lowest standard which can be raised on this subject (and on the present occasion a higher standard need not be sought) is, that conversation should never be of that kind which would make a religious allusion out of place or out of season, nor will it be, if, like

Abraham in his family, every father and every master will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.

In the introduction of such spiritual seasoning, care must always be had of a sudden and unnatural thrusting in of such solemn subjects. A sudden and unnatural allusion to such topics will act like the sudden and unnatural introduction of any other subject. It will make the speaker ridiculous, and probably stop the flow of conversation altogether; and thus that which was intended for profit, will prove a hindrance to usefulness.

In the choice of society, the Christian must aim at being select, not in the spirit of the Pharisee, who would thank God he is not as other men are, but in the spirit of David, who said, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart; I will set no wicked thing before my eyes; I hate the work of them that turn aside—it shall not cleave to me; I will not know a wicked person; mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they

may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me; he that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." The Christian has his duty *in* the world as well as *to* the world. We are specially taught that it is *not* our duty to go out of the world (1 Corinthians v. 10.), but still we are not to be *of* the world. To draw the line may be difficult; but it is manifest, if our pleasure is in the world, we shall in vain declaim at home upon friendship with the world being enmity with God. An old writer has well said, "What the love is, that the man is; where the love is, there the man is." The Christian must be mindful of this, lest he suffer from his company in his own soul, in his character and in his influence. Still in the world he must be, and consequently it is important to determine what his bearing must be in society. The Word of God will easily put an end to the difficulty: the Christian must be singular, he must not be eccentric. Let the world think it strange that we run not with them to the same excess of riot (1 Peter iv. 4), but have no fellow-

ship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Ephesians v. 11). It is not easy to illustrate this, for that which would be singular in one class of society is just and right in another; the settling the line of demarcation between singularity and eccentricity must, in a great measure, be left to the decision of that very uncommon faculty—common sense.

It will be sufficient to say, that as the fashions of the world pass away, so it behoves the Christian to avoid conformity to the world, and to aim at transformation into the image of Christ. In rebuking sin, rudeness must not be mistaken for faithfulness; and after the example of the various apostles, commendation will be mixed with blame. A desire must be cherished of doing good wherever we are: that desire will not be felt in vain. The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light; if they saw a friend risking his personal safety they would warn him; why do not Christians warn those who are risking their personal salvation? If they knew a physician on whose talent and power they could rely for the

restoration of their friend to health, they would undoubtedly recommend him; why then do not Christians speak more of the great Physician, whose blood healeth all our diseases, and whose word can give eternal life?

But whether in the family or in the social circle, the Christian must consider the duty of cheerfulness. Fair-weather Christianity is common, but the Christianity which will maintain its brightness in the dark and cloudy day of adversity is too frequently wanting; and yet, what will set before the young the power of Christian principle so forcibly, what will convince the unconverted of the reality of your profession so strongly, as the showing that the equanimity of your temper, the peacefulness of your mind, the happiness of your home, do not merely or mainly depend upon the creature; but that in the midst of abounding disappointment there still can be joy in the Lord? Cheerfulness in the Christian is the most satisfactory answer which can be given to the insinuation of the father of lies, that religion makes our pleasures less, and is the parent of gloom and wretchedness.

Cheerfulness is the greatest encouragement to holiness of living; for the man who feels he is in the possession of the favour of God, is the man who will delight most in doing the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Cheerfulness will make sorrows seem less and joys appear greater. It makes a man forget the pressure of his trials, and count up his mercies, which he knows are undeserved. No wonder, therefore, that St Paul should have so earnestly exhorted the Philippians, saying, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." The wonder really is, that men with such an injunction in their Bibles should think that religion forbids merriment, and that the Christmas fireside of the Christian must sparkle less brightly than that of the more frivolous worldling.

Cheerfulness should be specially cultivated on the Lord's-day, not that cheerfulness which originates from Sabbath-breaking, from the indulgence in those parties of pleasure which the world supposes will constitute happiness, and furnish comfort to the hard-worked artisan, but such cheerfulness as is consistent with employing the thoughts

and the time in considering the things which concern our everlasting peace. Such cheerfulness will bring no sorrow after it; such cheerfulness will be the best preparation for the Eternal Sabbath, when there will be joys at God's right hand for evermore.

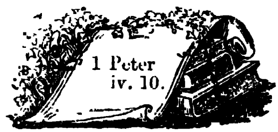
Many other points will naturally come to the mind of any one who is anxious to adorn his Christian profession. His conduct to relatives, especially to any whose worldly circumstances may be less prosperous than his own; his demeanour to those who are opposed to religion altogether; his plans for forwarding the education of his children, and encouraging their settlement in life; his example in supporting charities, and contributing in a manner proportionable to his income, besides others which need not be mentioned. But each of these points would require a longer investigation than can be pursued on the present occasion.

It remains then now to inquire how this Christian conduct may be at once attained and maintained. The character of true religion must be again referred to. It is an inward and an abiding principle. Thus the Apostle Paul, describing his

own manner of living, says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." It is then an absolute impossibility to live to God unless God lives in us. The Holy Spirit renews the heart, enlightens the mind, purifies the affections, implants new desires, strengthens what He first has implanted, continually waters it, and never leaves it till it has brought forth fruit to the praise and glory of God. Thus without Christ we can do nothing; while we work out our own salvation, we shall succeed only as God works in us, both to will and to do of His own good pleasure. The partaking of this spirit is within reach of every man. He who redeemed all mankind is willing to save to the uttermost all who come to Him. God has proclaimed that He is willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him (Luke xi. 13). He then that omits to seek the precious gift, he that neglects to avail himself of the help of the Omnipotent, must be content to take the blame of

the consequences to himself, his family, and society at large. But he that is a living epistle, he that walks humbly with his God, adorned with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price, will find that his example is not lost; his labour is not in vain; his children will be blessed; his family will flourish. Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as that which is to come. There will be assurance in life; confidence in death; joy at the advent. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.





THE

Principle of Christian Stewardship.

BY

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THE

PRINCIPLE OF CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

"As every man hath received one gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." —1 Peter iv. 10.

THESE words of the Apostle are of universal application. They concern ourselves, of the present generation, equally with those to whom they were immediately addressed. They belong to all who "in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ;" all who look to Him, and to Him alone, for the remission of their sins, for the acceptance of their prayers, for the salvation of their souls. For what is "the gift," which St Peter declares to have been alike "received" by every man, and which every man therefore is alike bound to "minister?" It cannot be any special endowment, any singular supernatural gift,

such as the gift of healing, or of prophecy, or of working miracles, or of speaking with tongues, or of interpreting strange tongues spoken by others. Such gifts, even at the time when the Apostle wrote, were possessed and exercised only by a few; while it is further evident, from their very nature, that they could not be in any sense "ministered" by man to his fellow, because they proceed immediately and exclusively from the Holy Ghost Himself, the sole author, in things spiritual, of every good and perfect gift. In the original, however, there is no limitation of the phrase to gifts ministerial or spiritual. The sentence would be more accurately rendered, "As every man hath received a gift"—*i. e.*, any gift which is a boon or free gift; any gift which comes to the possessor by the spontaneous and unmerited goodness of God, whether in the order of His providence, or by the dispensation of His grace; any gift which has not been independently acquired, and cannot, therefore, be independently maintained; which God did not give, and which God cannot take away—As every man hath received

such a gift, "so let him minister the same to others, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God." And every man, whether he recognise the relation or not, *is* a steward, who cannot say of aught which he possesses, "This is mine. My wisdom has discovered it; my labour has acquired it; my virtues have deserved it, and my power shall retain it. This is mine; it is my own—it is all my own; it is the one thing of which I can say, 'The Lord hath not given,' and of which, therefore, I can go on to say also, 'The Lord shall not take it away.'"

To affirm this, however, would be, in the judgment even of a child, only the infatuation of arrogance, the madness of presumption, the blasphemy of pride. For we are told in Holy Writ of one who *did* affirm it, and who had three excuses for his folly, in that he was a heathen, a conqueror, and a king. Yet Nebuchadnezzar himself could not say with impunity, as he looked from his terrace-garden, suspended in mid air, upon the stately city outspread beneath him, with its loftiest pinnacles scarcely stretching to his feet,

"Is not this great Babylon which I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?" The answer to this insane and infidel vaunt was a voice from heaven, the utterance of which turned his high swelling words of vanity into trembling, and caused the hair of his flesh to stand up, and made all his bones for to shake: "O Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee." And on that instant the boaster went forth unresisting from the palace of his pride, to herd with the beasts of the field, until seven years of expulsion and estrangement from all intercourse with human-kind had taught him a lesson, the learning of which was well worth even the price at which he purchased it; that the "Most High ruleth in the kingdom of heaven, and giveth power and dominion among men to whomsoever He will;" that "none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?" that "all His works are truth, and all His ways are judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

We have, however, I trust, no sympathy with those who, like the proud Assyrian, merge all thought of present stewardship and of future responsibility in the stupefaction of intemperance and excess, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." We would rather learn to be wise, and consider our latter end; we would prepare our reckoning before our judgment cometh; we would "acquaint ourselves with God," while yet we may, and "be at peace." We know that wealth, whether accumulated by the hand of the diligent, or transmitted by hereditary descent from a long line of distinguished ancestors, is no less directly the gift of God, than were (though at first he knew it not) the revenues and the royalties of the boastful and haughty Lord of Babylon. Whatever we may possess above others, or whatever others may possess above ourselves, it is God who hath bestowed, and can at any instant recall, His gift;. it is the Lord who hath given, and who can, if He see fit, at any moment take away. And if He does not, as in the case of the proud Assyrian, signally in our own view,

interrupt the course and order of His providence, to visit with condign and conspicuous punishment that "pride of heart" which is still, as ever, "abomination in His sight," yet is it an uncommon circumstance, even among ourselves, that when much goods have been laid up for many years, and the successful trader or speculator, outvying the wealth of nobles, and outshining the splendour of princes, the admiration of all around him, and the idol, it may be, of his own deceitful heart, is saying to his soul, "Eat, drink, and be merry," the pestilence seizes him; the fever falls upon him; the blood rushes to the brain, or congeals around the heart, and a still small voice is heard to whisper through the midnight darkness, "Thou fool, this night thy soul will be required of thee—then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Wretched, we may be assured, is that man, beyond all power of expression, yea, beyond all range of thought, who, being like the monarch of Babylon in his pride, is not like him in his penitence; who imitates his infidel boasting, but does not realise his

profound and salutary contrition; and to whom, therefore, pertains all his criminality, without any of his excuse. What must it be for accountable, immortal man to learn for the first time at such a moment the lesson which he ought to have been practising all his life through; to learn for the first time that he is but a steward, not a master; an occupier, not an owner; a tiller of the ground, not a proprietor of the soil; a servant among the household, not a principal over the house; that the property which he acquired by his labour or inherited from his ancestors; which, while he lived, he expended, and, in the anticipation of inevitable death, bequeathed also as if it were his own; was nothing more, after all, than property held in trust; and that, in the hour which places all mortal and immortal beings on their original footing of perfect equality (for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out), he is proved to have wasted the whole of life "in laying up treasure for himself," and is found in death to be not "rich towards God?"

The lesson to be learned, then, primarily from

the words of the Apostle in the text, and generally from many kindred passages of Holy Writ, is this. Whatever we possess or enjoy upon earth is God's; from Him we have received it, and to Him we must account for it. "It is He," said St Paul, addressing himself to a heathen auditory at Athens—"it is He who giveth us life, and breath, and all things;" while, in respect of things spiritual, "every man," declared the same Apostle, writing to the Church at Corinth—"every man hath his proper gift of God, though one after this manner, and another after that." Every man, therefore, is bound by the Apostle's injunction, be his condition, his capacity, or his circumstances what they may, who has received, and freely received, of God any one gift which is capable of being conveyed, imparted, or ministered to others. The grace of God, indeed, is manifold, as well as sovereign: it assumes different aspects, it speaks in different ways, it operates in different measures or proportions, dividing to each man severally as God wills; but it leaves none—none of the brotherhood and family of Christ—none who

are sheep of His flock, members of His body, partakers of His great salvation, altogether without a gift. It debars not the lowliest member of Christ's true Catholic Church from that which is the highest privilege and distinction even of the most richly endowed; from the opportunity and the ability to set forth the glory of God, and to set forward the salvation of mankind. There *may* be, or rather there *must* be, in the present state of things, and in a land which is the emporium of the world's commerce, the repository of the world's wealth; there *must* be a diversity of conditions, endowments, capacities, and possessions, which is almost infinite. But in the Church of Christ, though there be "diversities of gifts, it is the same Spirit;" and though "there be differences of administrations, it is the same Lord;" and though "there be diversities of operations, yet is it the same God that worketh all in all." Be the proper or special gift, therefore, what it may, every man who would merit the name and inherit the recompense of the faithful steward, must set himself, in the measure of

his ability, "to profit withal." Few, in comparison with the mighty aggregate, are laden with the responsible encumbrance of wealth; fewer still are endowed with the more precious, yet too often scarcely less perilous, gift of genius; few have drunk so deeply of the fount of knowledge as to have become qualified, by the exercise of superior intelligence, to wield a moral sovereignty over their fellows of the dust; few are the statesmen who arbitrate the destinies of empires; the conquerors, who read their history in a nation's eyes; the heroes, who, after jeoparding their lives to the death in the cause of freedom and of justice, receive their hard-won trophies from a Queen's imperial hand, accompanied by words and looks of sympathising kindness, which will be unforgotten till memory itself is lost in death; few are the poets, who mould the mind of the age in which they live, or the philosophers, whose tools are the elements, and whose theatre of action and of experiment is the universe itself; just as, in respect of spiritual gifts, all in the primitive church were "not prophets, nor all apostles, nor all workers

of miracles, nor all speakers with tongues." In the primitive church, however—and equally at this hour in the true holy Catholic Church of Christ which overspreads the world—there was, however varied the walk and sphere of life, to each there was ONE gift, and that the most excellent of all, which was common to the most destitute of the poor, and the most abject of the lowly; and this was, and is, the crowning grace of charity, or Christian love. "Above all things," exhorted St Peter, "have fervent charity among yourselves." "Above all things," responds St Paul, "put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." And illustrating by his own example and experience the paramount value and importance of this more excellent way, "Though I have," he said, "the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." Love, therefore, is the crowning gift; love is the common ministry: all true Christians love one another, because they are alike members of Christ: they love the wander-

ing sheep which He came as the Good Shepherd to seek; they love the endangered and benighted souls, for which, as for their own, Christ died. And love, or charity, did in ancient times, and still does, work miracles of its own. Of old, we know, it made the widow's mite equal, in the divine, and therefore unerring estimate of Christ—nay, why should we not say superior—to a nation's treasure, to a royal revenue; for it was a more sublime and perfect development of charity, when she who had little gave "all she had, even all her living," than when they gave most largely and most willingly, to whom remained abundance still. Love, again, exalted the beggar who lay prostrate at the rich man's gate, full of sores, to the highest elevation of moral dignity even there, for it produced in him that devoted resignation, that unconquerable patience, that constancy of endurance unto the last, which have made him, like the patriarch Job, "an example of suffering affliction and of patience" even to the end of time. He loved the Hand that smote him; he loved God even in His chastening, for he knew that

"whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth;" and he bare the chastening as one who loved the Lord. If then it be asked what is the common gift, the gift most excellent, precious, inestimable, divine, it is, we answer, the love of God, conducing, or rather constraining, to the love of man. It is the mind of Christ embodied in the following of Christ, by the reflection of His image, by the tracing His steps. And in the development of this perfect and universal principle of action, there is no respect of persons with God. Those who possess not the five talents, have but to occupy the two; and those even who are upon the same level of temporal destitution with the noble-hearted widow, depending like her upon the exercise of daily labour for the provision of daily bread, and thus having but a single talent, may, like her, be faithful in the one. "A man is accepted according to what he hath, and not to that he hath not." "He that is faithful in the least," said the Lord Himself, "is also faithful in much." The present temporal disadvantages of the Christian poor may well be counterbalanced by the

thought, that the surest and safest path to the heavenly city leads through the Valley of Humiliation, avoiding alike the pitfalls of presumption, and the precipices of pride. Consequently we affirm, without exception, concerning all who, having been baptised into Christ, have also put on Christ; all who really look upon life as the time of preparation and probation also for life and immortality; that whatever they receive is from God's grace; that whatever they possess is to be employed to God's glory, "according to the ability which God giveth;" and with the aim, and desire, and prayer, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ."

If then we are to express in one brief phrase what is to be regarded as the one great principle of action which not only cements and compacts the Christian community in itself, but distinguishes it from every other, we would take those concise, but most comprehensive words of the apostle Paul, "None of us liveth to himself." And we might go beyond this:—every one of us strives to "live unto Him who died for them, and rose again."

We cannot live to Christ, however, without living to those that are Christ's. If we are in very deed members of Christ, we cannot but be members one of another; and the fact of membership with each other is itself the demonstration, the practical and palpable demonstration, of membership with Him. "By this we know that we are the children of God," said the apostle John, "when we love God, and keep His commandments;" while, contrariwise, "if any man say I love God, and loveth not his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" Nor does this in the slightest degree invalidate or affect another saying of the same Apostle, which might at first view appear to militate against it—"He that believeth hath the witness in himself;" for the inward witness is the principle, as the outward witness is the practice, of Christian charity. The existence of the principle within proves that we are justified to God through Christ by faith; the exercise and exhibition of the practice without causes us to be

justified to man by works. Such is the Lord's own standard and ordinance. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye love one another, as I have loved you; that ye also love one another." If, therefore, it be asked, "How He loved us?" we answer, that "He came to seek and to save that which was lost; and if it be asked further, "How are we to prove that we love Him?" the answer is still ready to our hand, "By endeavouring to follow the example which He hath left us, so that we give all diligence to seek the lost, though it must be His alone to save!"

We do not ask of any, then, in the application of this subject, whether they have a gift? nor yet do we ask of any, "what is your special gift in comparison with that of others?" The former question is answered by the apostle Paul in words already cited, that "every one hath his own proper gift of God;" and the latter could have no bearing upon the attainment of the "end of faith, which is salvation," for the requirement will be in every case proportioned to the trust; and he who

has traded with the one talent, and made it two, will be placed, we cannot doubt, upon the same level in the day of the trial of all hearts, with him who has traded with the five, and made them ten. The real question for high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, bond and free, is this, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? what hast thou that thou hast not FREELY received—received from God's spontaneous, unmerited mercy—received not on account of thy desert, but even in despite of thy demerit?" Would the wisest and worthiest of mankind contend that they had any claim upon God? Would any sane person aver, "I was born to royalty, to rank, to affluence, because I was not born in sin? I have attained to honour, to station, to wealth, to competence, because I have never been practically conscious of iniquity—because I have never admitted it into my life, or regarded it in my heart?" Could any compose his countenance and fashion his lips to affirm, "God has given me what I have, because I have deserved it, while He has withheld the like gift from my neighbour, my dependant, my domestic, or my slave, because he

has deserved it *not?*" Surely no man could be found upon the face of the earth who would deliberately put his wealth into one scale, and his worthiness into the other, and hold the balance with so uneven a hand as to create an equipoise. None, in any event, who admitted that he had received a gift from God, could find a plausible answer to the inquiry of St Paul, "If thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" If we glory at all in what we have received, we can only glory in the Lord who gives, and we do well when we glory in the Lord; but even he who thus glories would but glory to his own shame, if, having freely received, he were not freely to give. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" the first "fruit of the Spirit is love."

Here, then, we are brought to the "conclusion of the whole matter," for the principle of Christian action enjoined in the text has been at once shown to be universal, and proved to be imperative. As it is of actual necessity that, if we possess at all, we must have received, so is it a moral necessity that,

if we have received at all, we must be ready to impart. The good steward is he, and he alone, who dispenses aright what his Master has committed to his charge, in accordance with the principles and in fulfilment of the purposes which his Master has expressly enjoined; and who knows not that the most precious, because the most enduring of all interests, is that which is to be primarily and pre-eminently regarded, first for ourselves, and next only to ourselves, for others? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" If, therefore, the "kingdom and righteousness of God" are the things which we should be the first to seek, they are those that we should be foremost, so far as human agency can accomplish it, to impart. And while it is, beyond all question, a Christian duty to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to provide a refuge for the widow, and an asylum for the fatherless; to be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and solace to the sorrowing, and defence to the oppressed; still, as to the

"weightier matters," of the ministering the bread of life, and the making known the gospel of salvation, and the proclaiming pardon and peace to the sinner through the blood of the Cross, "these ought we to do, and not to leave the other undone." "As we have opportunity, we are to do good unto all men," but there is a special preference and priority to the "household of faith." A man's first concern should ever be for those of his own house. The principle of Christian stewardship has no limit to its exercise but the circumference of the universe itself; but the practice of Christian love must have its commencement and its centre in the home. Have we then, wherever the providence of God has opened to us the opportunity—have we endeavoured, whether throughout an enlarged or contracted sphere of action, to be the instruments of God's mercy in the winning of the souls for which Christ died? Have we made any strenuous efforts, any self-denying sacrifices, whether for the conversion of the heathen abroad, or the enlightenment of the ignorant at home? If the light of God's truth has found en-

trance into our own hearts, are we doing all that lies within the scope of our ability to irradiate the dark places of the neighbourhood around us, to turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God? Whatever the weakness of the human instrument, the Holy Spirit can accomplish this great end even by the meanest; while, contrariwise, whatever the excellency of speech or of wisdom, the most highly gifted, the most largely endowed, cannot accomplish it without His aid:—"No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" and it was St James, distinguished as the Apostle of the poor, who declared, when writing even to the poor of this world, "Brethren, if any of you do err from the faith, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

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Christian Membership.

BY

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CHRISTIAN MEMBERSHIP.

"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."—Hebrews xiii. 3.

YOU are all aware that one of the chief things proposed by Christianity, is the binding men into one family; so that, however separated they may be by varieties of circumstance and condition, they may yet be as brothers, or feel themselves members of the same household. It can hardly be doubted, that, had evil never entered this creation, there would, comparatively, have been nothing of those breakings-up of the race into parties and fractions, which make thousands as utter strangers to thousands, as though they had not sprung from the same line and parentage. It could not indeed have been, that, as men multi-

plied and overspread the globe, they should have been all personally acquainted the one with the other. But there might have been universal kindliness and sympathy; there might have been no opposition of interests: one man might have been a stranger to another, in the sense of not having seen him in the flesh; but there might yet have been but one heart throughout the extended population, and each might have felt that every other was but part of himself.

Sin, however, by generating selfishness, dissolved at once the principle of brotherhood, and caused men to knit themselves into fractions, to the utter forgetfulness of their being members of the same family. The commonness of origin was soon practically lost sight of; there remained no traces of remembrance that all had descended from the same parents: feuds, rivalries, and wars arose between different nations, yea, different households, so that, had it been planet against planet, nature against nature, the collision could not have been sterner, nor the animosity more intense.

It is one great design of Christianity, to cor-

rect this vast disorganisation, and to gather into one the dislocated elements. Sooner or later, as we learn from its magnificent predictions, it will accomplish so glorious a result, and cause the earth to be inhabited by those who make up one body, and breathe one spirit. But already, were not its tendencies counteracted through our perverseness and unbelief, it would have effected much towards this general brotherhood. Christianity is emphatically a remedy; and, so far as the remedy has been applied, its excellence should be visible in the, at least partial, cure. Therefore are we bound to take shame to ourselves, as knowing that the fault must lie wholly with ourselves, that, notwithstanding the establishment and prevalence of Christianity amongst us, there is so little, so very little, of what can, without sacrifice of truth, be designated Christian unity. It seems expressly laid down in Scripture, that the Church of Christ is one, one outward visible body, as well as animated by one spirit, and receiving one Saviour. And men may strive to prove this alleged unity consistent with multiplied schisms

and divisions; but the express saying of Christ, in his prayer to the Father, shortly before his crucifixion, will always show that another unity was meant than any which, by any stretch of language, can be affirmed amongst ourselves. It was thus that our blessed Lord prayed for his followers, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they all may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

What kind of oneness is it for which the Redeemer here prays? Judge it by its affirmed consequence or result: "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." So, then, the oneness, the unity, which there ought to be amongst Christians, was itself to be an argument or evidence of the divine mission of Christ—a convincing evidence, causing the world to believe that Jesus had been commissioned by God. Whereas, what is the effect of any such unity as can now be said to subsist amongst Christians, unity in doctrine, unity in essentials? What but to excite the scorn and ridicule of the unbelieving? So

far from being convinced by what there may be of agreement amongst Christians, in spite of their many differences, these differences furnish them, as every one knows, with perhaps their most fruitful source of cavil and objection; and can that be the unity which ought to be found amongst Christians, which gives arguments to infidelity, when that for which our Lord and Master prayed was itself to overcome infidelity?

Nay, we ought seriously to lay to heart our unhappy divisions, beseeching God to give us grace, that we may practically recognise and exhibit the brotherhood of Christians, for, alas! we are yet very far—every one may see that we are yet very far—from such a condition of things as is indicated by our text, a condition in which we should "remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being ourselves also in the body."

There are two very different, but both highly important principles here asserted, or enforced by St Paul. There is the principle of fellowship, and there is the principle of forethought: of fel-

lowship, for we are to feel as though bound with them in bonds; of forethought, for we are to remember that we are ourselves in the body, and therefore exposed to the adversities which claim our sympathy in others. Or, to expound our text by the motives, rather than by the principles, which it puts forth, there are here two great reasons, or inducements, suggested by the apostle, why Christians should be earnest in works of Christian love. The one is derived from their intimate connection with the suffering, the other from their own liability to similar visitations. We propose to examine, in succession, the strength of each of these motives.

Now St Paul may here be said to go even beyond what he has laid down in another very large and comprehensive precept—"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." He requires something more than sympathy, more, at least, than sympathy as commonly understood, though not, perhaps, than sympathy in its strict and literal import. One man is generally said to sympathise with another, who is grieved when and

because the other is grieved; and sympathy, as thus understood, is little more than pity or commiseration. But to suffer with another—which is actually to sympathise—goes much beyond the weeping with another. It is making the griefs of the other mine own, so that the blow is upon me as well as upon him, the wound is in my heart as well as in his.

The members of one household accurately sympathise, or suffer together, when death has come in, and snatched away one from their circle. The loss is a common loss, affecting all equally; the sorrow of each is literally the sorrow of every other. A Christian friend, or minister, may visit this disconsolate family, animated by the kindest feeling, and sincerely desirous to afford them a measure of consolation, through the manifest interest which he takes in their grief. And he may succeed, for exhibitions of kindliness have a great faculty of going, like balm, to the heart; the tears which friendship sheds with us in our wo possess the wonderful property of stanching our own. But, nevertheless, this comforting visiter may

rather feel for, than with, the afflicted: they have lost a brother or a sister; but he does not necessarily feel as though he had lost a brother or a sister; the blow has made them orphans, but he does not necessarily feel as though it had made him an orphan; so that, whilst he may literally and thoroughly obey the injunction which requires of him that he weep with those that weep, he may yet be very far off from that actual sympathy, that suffering with those that suffer, which is prescribed in our text, and which requires of you that you not only commiserate the captive, but so put yourselves into his position, as to wear his chain, and share his captivity.

And yet it is evident, that, so far as Christianity succeeds in restoring the brotherhood which sin has infringed, it will substitute sympathy, thus strictly understood, for that which, in our present broken state, has usurped the definition. It is only needful that I come to regard any one of you as a brother, and when he loses a kinsman, I shall lose a kinsman: I shall not merely be sorry for his bereavement, but shall feel that

bereavement my own. So far as two families can be made one, the sorrows of either are the sorrows of both; and if there were but one vast family on the face of the earth, whatsoever affected the individual, would affect also the mass.

And yet, though such a state of things would differ immeasurably from the present, and would seem to realise much, not only of the dreams of poetry, but of what are yet more brilliant and glorious, the prophecies of Scripture, we hardly think that even this would come up to what is implied in our text. The universal brotherhood would put the earth, it may be, into what would have been its condition, had sin never entered, and weakened the links between man and man. But Christianity aims at more than mere repair and restoration: it is a scheme which, not content with recovering for the human race what it lost through apostacy, proposes its advancement to a far higher than its original excellence and happiness. And, therefore, if you observe attentively the statements of Scripture, you will perceive that Christianity does not stop at universal brother-

hood, but goes on to universal membership; it is not into one family, but rather into one body, that it desires and labours to gather all the ends of the earth.

There is no difficulty in perceiving that the difference is considerable between the objects thus defined. It is true, that the feeling myself the brother of another would cause many of his trials to be felt as my own: nevertheless, I do not yet so identify myself with him, as to suffer, in my own person, whatsoever he has to suffer in his. The two brothers, for example, may lose a brother, or a parent, by the same death; but they cannot, except by a great stretch of language, be said to lose a child by the same death; so that, even in becoming as a brother to any one of you, that one would still have his own griefs, which I could not actually make mine, and I should have mine, which he could not actually make his.

And this is precisely what holds good in regard of the particular case which is instanced by St Paul in our text. It is not mere brotherhood which will make the captivity of one the captivity

of two. It will cause me to feel very deeply, with all a brother's warmth, and all a brother's interest, for the prisoner to whom I am so closely related: but it does not put the chains upon myself, in anything of the measure, or the sense, which would justify the saying, that I am bound with him in the dungeon.

But the doctrine, so expressly laid down in Scripture, that, through the action of Christianity, we are not merely brothers, but members one of another, would evidently, if wrought into our practice, effect that identification which would make us bound with " them in bonds." According to the scriptural idea or representation, Christians constitute but one body, the mystical body of Christ. And from this, applying the acknowledged principle, that, " if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it," it follows that every Christian, in the measure in which he has attained towards perfection, will seem to bear in his own person the very sufferings, and to receive in his own person the very blessings, allotted to those who have " obtained like precious faith " with himself. And when we

think how deficient we are, even in such sympathy as is generally understood by the word, and which would result from universal brotherhood, we may well be staggered at finding that the Christian standard is yet vastly higher, and that universal brotherhood would be only a stage towards universal membership.

But what an image does it give us of the condition of the world, to suppose men all actuated by the consciousness of being "members one of another." That very emphatic promise which is made to the meek—"the meek shall inherit the earth"—would seem to have respect to this membership, and to find in its prevalence its own thorough accomplishment. How is it that a multitude can "inherit the earth?" How is that which is to be divided amongst myriads, to be possessed by individuals? The promise is somewhat differently put in the Book of Revelation—"he"—that is, every individual who "overcometh, and is faithful unto death"—"shall inherit all things." But if one inherit all, what remains for the thousands of his fellow-heirs? How can each

have all, the whole earth without exception, and without reservation? Only on the principle, that every one is the member of every other, and that, therefore, there cannot be an individual who is not equally in general possession. Even now I might be said to "inherit the earth," the earth with all its varied riches and magnificence, if I felt myself part of its every proprietor, so that we were not so much different persons, as component members of the same. It would not then be possible to bestow power or wealth on another, without my having the impression of its being bestowed on myself, so that I should be virtually with every king upon his throne, and sway an universal sceptre, though all the while, it might be, occupying an insignificant station. In the measure in which we are now able to divest ourselves of envy, we approach towards this inheriting of the earth; for we approach the so appropriating to ourselves the prosperity of others, as to have share in the advantages which we never actually reach. But envy will not wholly disappear, till the law of membership is practically and universally carried out;

and then it will become impossible, if only on the principle that there will be nothing to envy in another, because nothing which is not our own as well as his. Thus is it, that universal membership is tantamount to universal possession; so that whatsoever is most ample, and glorious, in the predictions of Scripture, does but follow, in direct consequence, on that binding together of human-kind, which it is the great purpose of Christianity to effect.

And who can tell us what Christian philanthropy would be, if the law of membership were recognised and obeyed? You ought—thus it is that St Paul seems to enjoin and exhort in our text—you ought to remember the imprisoned, not merely as being your fellow-creatures, but rather as being, in a certain sense, yourselves. What a motive to exertion on their behalf! how unremitting, how earnest, would be that exertion, were the motive, indeed, in full force. You tell me of unfortunate captives. They have fallen into the hands of cruel taskmasters. They are shut out from the cheerful light of day. They eat their bread

in bitterness of soul, and almost long for death. And you say to me, "Remember them." Remember them? why, you have told me of myself. It is mine own captivity which you have described; it is the clanking of my own chain which you have made me hear. I must struggle for their emancipation, that my limbs may be free, and that I may breathe the fresh breath of heaven.

Oh, Christians, what, indeed, would be your benevolence, if ye felt that they were your own members which ye were invited to succour! And it is quite evident, from our text, that nothing less is expected of you as professed disciples of Christ. The apostle introduces the principle of membership, just as he might the very simplest and most elementary of truths, on which there could be neither ignorance nor dispute. He does not seem to be proposing any rule, or standard, to which men were unaccustomed, but, on the contrary, one which, as being generally acknowledged, needed only to be indicated by a passing remark. And yet it is possible enough that this doctrine, which we have endeavoured to lay down, has to many

the air of a new and far-fetched speculation. Give us, you are ready to say, pictures or descriptions of distress; expatiate on the miseries by which numbers are oppressed, and move our feelings by a touching tale of human grief; but, as to wishing us so to make the wretchedness our own, that we shall labour for its alleviation, just as though it were pressing on ourselves, this is altogether beyond nature, and its possibility is but the fiction of an exaggerated theology. Beyond nature, we confess it, but not beyond grace; and the Christian is not to be content until, in relieving the distressed, he can feel that he acts on the great principle of membership. It must not be enough for him that his heart yearns at a tale of calamity, and that he is ready to employ his money and his time in lightening the pressure of which he has been told. He must see to it, that he have part in the bearing, as well as in relieving, the calamity. His relieving is to be the result of his bearing: he is to relieve, that is, as one who is relieving himself, with all that activity and all that perseverance which our own personal interests are sure

to elicit. It is himself, whose house is in flames. It is himself, whose property is destroyed. It is himself, who is stretched on that sick bed. Oh, indeed, it may sound to you as requiring too much, to require that the Christian should thus identify himself with the sufferer, or act as though that sufferer were himself; but tell me, whether such identification would be anything more than the practical recognition of our being all "members one of another;" tell me, whether less was demanded by the apostle, when he enjoined upon believers that they should "remember them that were in bonds," not merely as commiserating them, but as actually "bound with them?"

But let us proceed to the second principle, or motive, which is contained in our text. St Paul descends to a lower, yet not wholly different, ground: he leaves that of Christian membership, and takes his position on that of our own exposure to misfortune. We call this lower, but not wholly different, ground; for, in expounding the law of Christian membership, we have argued that every believer is to appropriate to himself the sufferings

of the afflicted, or so to make them his own as to transfer himself to the afflicted man's place. And now it is not altogether changing the argument, but rather endeavouring to prevent any one from evading its force, to remind you how possible it is that you will actually have to occupy the afflicted man's place, and that not, indeed, through what you may call a theological refinement, but through the dispensations and appointments of Providence, you will receive in your own person the ills which you may see in the person of another.

But whether it be, or be not, wholly different ground to which the apostle now carries his argument for active benevolence, there can be no debate that his argument becomes more palpable and intelligible, addressing itself so closely to every man's common sense and feeling, that it can scarcely require to be illustrated or enforced.

"Remember them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body." "As being yourselves also in the body." What an amount of motive is gathered into these simple words. It has been one of the natural, we might almost say

necessary, consequences, on the combination of men into societies, presenting all possible varieties of condition and circumstance, that there has been a comparative losing sight of the equal liability of all to the several ills to which flesh is heir. In an early stage of society, when men are nearly on a level, and every one, in a measure, depends on his own strivings for the means of subsistence, there is, evidently, much the same exposure to misfortune, and none can be fancied secure against calamities by which others have been, or may be, overtaken. But the case alters, as society is wrought into a finished structure and form, and, through the accumulation of capital, certain ranks are placed beyond the need of labouring for a livelihood. Then, in all the securities with which property is fenced, and in the ready supplies which it commands, there is something which looks like, and which passes for, evidence that a measure of independence is reached, and that some are in the enjoyment of certainty, whilst others remain within reach of accident.

It is very difficult not to fancy, that the man of

large ancestral revenues, inhabiting the baronial hall, which proudly surmounts the domain that owns him for its lord, has an exemption from the contingencies and chances of want which beset the poor peasant that tills one of its fields. And that noble, surrounded by everything which luxury can either desire or invent, might look on us coldly, and even angrily, if we backed an appeal to him on behalf of some starving cottager, by simply reminding him that he was himself "also in the body." It might sound to him like the threat, whether of ignorance or of insolence, that it should thus be implied, that, notwithstanding all his state and abundance, he might come to want the morsel which we asked him to bestow; and, if he complied with the petition, he would probably reprove the motive by which it had been urged.

And, of course, it does need a very thorough and practical recognition of the truth, that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," to be able to put aside all the appearances of security and independence which hoarded wealth furnishes,

and to view in every man, whatever his circumstances, a pensioner on the bounty of that Omnipotent Parent, who "openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." It is not to be wondered at, if the beggar be commonly thought to have to live from day to day on the providence of God, whilst the man of accumulated stores is supposed to have in hand provision for every future necessity. But what actual infidelity, what virtual atheism, may be detected in every such notion, whether secret or acknowledged, of the dependence of one class on God, and the independence of another. There is herein, if we may so express it, the substitution of money for God; and it is, we suppose, mainly from such substitution that the covetous man is declared an idolater. The rich man is supposed, and supposes himself, secure against want, not because he has a Father in heaven, who has promised to take care of his children, but because he has a certain quantity of the representatives of clothing and food, of that for which clothing and food, so long as they last, may be procured in exchange. And if, on this

account, he is to be reckoned beyond the reach of want, nothing can be plainer than that the silver and the gold are virtually invested with the sovereignty of God; for they are supposed to insure that the sun will shine, and the showers descend, and the corn spring forth, so that whosoever has them in his coffers, has power over the granaries of nature, or can command the earth to yield him its productions.

Away with this idolatry, this infidelity, this atheism! I would rather have the security against want which the meanest of our villagers enjoys, whose daily bread is the subject of daily prayer and daily toil, than that of the foremost of our capitalists, who in any way gives indulgence to the sentiment of the rich man in the parable—"Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." The one, indeed, has a security, the security of a prayerful dependence upon God; whereas the other has no security whatsoever, but lies exposed to the peril of being punished for presumption.

And it matters nothing to us what may be the

worldly circumstances of any one, nor how far they may seem to remove him from exposure to poverty—if he be a man, he may come to be a starving man; and that, too, without any of those inexplicable occurrences and reverses which seem to mark God as specially interfering to bring round an unlooked-for catastrophe. There ought, therefore, to be to him as much cogency as to the man whose property seems jeopardied in the motive of being himself "in the body," when it is the relief of the actually destitute for which we appeal to his bounty. And this is perhaps the only case in which there is even the appearance of exemption from liability to the misfortunes with which we see others oppressed. In every other case, we may contend that even the appearance is wanting, so that there cannot be the shadow of an excuse for denying to the apostle's motive the greatest possible force. It cannot be said that any one form of sorrow is appropriated to this class, and warded off from that. All are accessible through the same channels, and all capable of the same wounds.

It is in no degree dependent on the rank and station of a household, whether death shall come in amongst its members, and leave behind him vacant places and wrung hearts. And never is the sameness of human condition, in all main respects, so affectingly demonstrated, as when a prince, or a noble, is bending in passionate sorrow over the bier of one whom he loved, and there is nothing in his tears, and nothing in his groans, to distinguish him from the rustic whose wife or child is carried forth to burial. You may always observe with what great interest are read the accounts of the deportment of exalted personages when visited with affliction; and how a record of the weeping of royalty, when "death has gone up into our palaces," seems to fix all the attention of a people, and move all their sympathies. And it is not that a mere prurient curiosity is gratified; and that they who never visit the interior of palaces are pleased at the withdrawment of the veil which commonly keeps them in ignorance. The interest taken in the sorrows of royalty arises mainly from the touching evidence which it gives

as to royalty not being exempt from the common lot of humanity. For, without actually believing that kings are cast in any different mould from ourselves, we have naturally a sort of floating idea that, moving in their own special sphere, they enjoy immunities and privileges which separate them from others of their race; and when, accordingly, we hear of their bending in anguish over a corpse, and exclaiming bitterly with David, "O Absalom, my son, my son," it comes upon us like the correction of an error, or with all the force of a discovery; and we almost start, and almost weep, at finding that royalty is made of the same brittle stuff as ourselves, and may be broken and shivered by the same kind of blow.

It is certain, then, that rank gives no exemption from misfortune; the great and the mean bow beneath the same sorrows, and die of the same sicknesses. Is there not, in consequence, whoever be the party addressed, and whatever his affliction who asks to be remembered, the greatest cogency in the motive of "being in the body?" It is the enlisting of selfishness on the

side of the afflicted, and the calling on us to be merciful, if we would find mercy ourselves. The thing assumed, and it is not a thing to be disputed, is, that God's moral government is eminently and avowedly retributive, so that, "with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again." And if we live beneath a retributive government, and if, moreover, we lie exposed to all the afflictions with which others are visited, then—if only on a principle of self-preservation—we are bound to be mindful of the suffering, lest, brought into similar circumstances, we find our churlishness and neglect returned to us in kind. And inexpressibly bitter would it be, if, living to be oppressed and deserted ourselves, and to ask in vain for succour and sympathy, we should have to remember how, in our own sunshine, we had cared nothing for those over whom darkness had gathered, and to feel that we were but reaping a harvest, of which our own want of charity had sown all the seeds.

If, therefore, we would hope for comfort in our own day of sorrow, for succour in our own day of

need, we must act on the principle of "remembering them that suffer affliction," as "being ourselves also in the body." "In the body," so that thine abundance may become poverty; and, therefore, man of wealth, remember the poor. "In the body," so that thine happiness may be blighted; and, therefore, man on whom all things smile, remember the mourners. "In the body," so that thou mayest be visited with sickness; and, therefore, man in health, remember the diseased. "In the body," so that thou must die; and, therefore, living man, remember the departing. "In the body," so that thou mayest be deprived of all the means of grace; and, therefore, frequenter of churches, remember those to whom the gospel has not come.

Yea, thus you cannot imagine any one case of appeal in which, so liable are all to the same pains and griefs, direct motive is not furnished from the being "in the body." And if there appeared to you anything obscure and transcendental in the doctrine of universal membership, from which we first derived the duty of ministering to the afflicted,

you cannot plead the like of a doctrine which we derive from your own circumstances and your own sensibilities. It is not because there are mysterious links of association binding into one the scattered members of the Church, that we require you now to remember the afflicted. Many of you are so little aware of these links, that we might seem to speak parables. It is because you have friends that may die, advantages that may be lost, privileges that may be withdrawn, hopes that may be blighted, nerves that may be shattered, limbs that may be racked, hearts that may be torn, that we urge on you the endeavouring to alleviate the varied forms of human distress. Ah, if it be expressly as Christians that we say to you, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them," it is as men, fallen, feeble, mortal men, that we address you when we add, "and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."

In the beginning of our discourse, we dwelt on the unity which should exist amongst Christians, and we lamented its want. There are two or three

remarks on this matter which it may be well that you remember.

We admit that the differences—the divisions—amongst Christians furnish unbelievers with a plausible argument against Christianity itself. No wonder, for we have our Lord's own authority, that unity amongst Christians would have practically been very powerful in convincing the world that He had come forth from God. And yet there cannot well be a more unphilosophical argument than that which concludes against the divine origin of Christianity from the differences which exist amongst Christians. If ten thousand men believed a book to have been written by Cicero, would it be any proof that it was not written by Cicero, that they attached different meanings to many of its paragraphs? The agreement of such a multitude in the fact of the authorship, would be all the more striking from their disagreement in the sense of the paragraphs. The fact that the book may be so interpreted, as to make Cicero say unintelligible and even contradictory things, does not shake their persuasion that Cicero is the writer;

and is not this strong proof that the persuasion has firm grounds on which to rest?

The case is nearly the same with the Bible. If the sects of Christians disagree as to the meaning of its statements, they all agree on the fact of its authorship. They may divide on the sense of a verse, but they unite on the divinity of the volume. And the division, we contend, should give weight to the union. Believers in revelation, as well as unbelievers, can perceive that a revelation, to be divine, must throughout be consistent. And when they find that different, and, sometimes, apparently opposite theories, may be drawn from the Bible, it is because they are possessed of an overwhelming demonstration in favour of the Bible, that they are not thereby moved to doubt its divine origin; for, if such demonstration were not thoroughly complete, the least appearance of inconsistency would engender suspicion. So that, whilst we condemn and lament the divisions of Christians, we contend that the infidel uses these divisions unfairly and unphilosophically, when he would turn them into an argument against the truth of

Christianity. He plies us with the disagreements of Christians; but we ply him with their wonderful agreement. He concludes that there can be no good proof for the divinity of a volume which can be variously expounded; but we conclude that the proof must be of the very strongest, seeing that it equally convinces the most opposite interpreters. And therefore we tell the objector, that, if he would show himself a master of accurate reasoning, he must not speak of the differences, without speaking also of the union; and we defy him to bring an argument from the fact that Christians are divided as to the meaning of the Bible, which shall not be more than counterpoised by an argument from this other fact, that Christians are agreed as to the origin of the Bible.

Now, much which we have thus advanced, in regard of Christianity in general, applies with equal force to Protestantism in particular. The Roman Catholic will point triumphantly to the unity of his own church; and, contrasting it with the schisms by which Protestantism is rent, will infer at once that Popery is the religion of the

Bible. Every one who has at all entered into the controversy with Papists, knows the weight which they attach to this argument. And we do not deny that there is so far unity amongst Papists, that they are not broken, like Protestants, into independent and, too often, conflicting sects. But when this unity is set up as an incontrovertible proof that the Roman Catholic is the only true Church, it must be rigidly examined and tested by a scriptural criterion.

Referring, then, to what our blessed Lord said, "That they all may be one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," we ask, Has the Papal unity the effect of convincing the world that Jesus came from God? Is it not notorious, that this unity is produced and maintained by vesting infallibility in the Pope; by allowing no appeal from the decisions of the Church in matters of religion; by denying right of private judgment; by refusing to the laity the free perusal of the Bible; and by denouncing as heretical, and then visiting with persecution, all who shall presume to form and avouch opinions of their own? There

may be unity, but it is the unity which results from fettering the human understanding, and giving full play to the machinery of an Inquisition. Let Protestantism disgrace itself by using the same engines, and Protestantism shall be able to appeal to the same unity. Let the noble principles of toleration be exiled from England; let the Established Church have the power of decreeing that none shall dissent from her communion; and let the civil magistrate enforce her decrees by the sword and the stake; and we shall soon have the unity—idolise and applaud it, if you can—the unity of Popery in Protestantism. It is the glory of our day, and of our country, that, whilst an Establishment is upheld for the propagation of a pure and reformed Christianity, every man is left at liberty to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. And if, through bigotry and persecution, such unity as the Papal were forced upon England, who thinks that the cause of religion would be advanced, or the world more convinced that Christianity is of God? The only unity which can witness to the truth of Christi-

anity, must be a unity which owes nothing to human compulsion. Therefore, we reject indignantly the Papal unity, when given in proof that Popery has the advantage over Protestantism. We reply to the statement, that the divisions of Reformed Churches prove them in the wrong, whilst the oneness of the Roman Catholic proves it in the right —we reply to this, that the Reformed Churches might exchange the divisions for the oneness, if they could so far forget the laws of Christianity, as to seal up the Bible, chain the conscience, and burn the heretic.

And yet, with all these statements, we affirm the duty of striving to avoid divisions, and of endeavouring to "keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." There is nothing for which we should pray more earnestly, than that God would heal the breaches of our Zion; nothing which we should more sedulously cultivate, than a spirit of love and forbearance. And what comparative unity there might have been, had men been flexible on what was unimportant, and only stanch when fundamentals were at stake. One thing

deserves to be carefully noted: there is a great difference to be observed between the schism and the schismatic. We are not to confound the persons with the actions. Those that separate from us should have our love, whilst the divisions have our lamentations. It is forgetfulness of this which has laid waste our Zion. If all were simply desirous that Christ should be exalted, there would long ago have been peace, long ago union. And even now, if all who profess godliness would make it their aim to be single-hearted in their Master's cause, many ramparts of separation—God speedily grant it—would soon melt away; we should—oh, happy state! may it increasingly be ours—"bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

PART II.



CHAPTER I.

THE AIM OF LIFE, AND THE CHOICE OF A RELIGION.

The Choice of a Religion.

[BISHOP BLOMFIELD.]

UNLESS a man is certain, which he never can be, that his soul will perish together with his body, religion can never be a matter of indifference to him. In any case, he must choose between religion and no religion. Even the people of the heathen world, who had no knowledge of revelation, had yet such a knowledge of God, as rendered them accountable to him for their actions; and consequently made it imperative upon them to choose their religion: and for choosing wrongly they incurred the just displeasure of the Most High; "because, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and

changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and to creeping things." (Romans i. 21.)

It is evident, that if God has been pleased to make a revelation of his will and purposes to mankind, that revelation is the only sure guide to which they can look, in matters of religion. If God has told them that they must believe certain truths, and practise certain duties, in order to secure his favour, no man can expect to escape his just anger, who disbelieves, or disobeys his words: and if there be in the world any religion, which is authenticated by sufficient evidence, as having been revealed to mankind by God, it cannot possibly be a matter of indifference with any man, to whom that religion is proposed, whether he receive it or not. No reasonable being is at liberty to pass it by, as of no importance; or to say, that he will not trouble himself to consider whether it be true or false. For the question, whether it be true, involves another most awful one, that of salvation or condemnation; and he who refuses

to look at it, or neglects to walk by it, does yet, in effect, make his choice:—he chooses for himself condemnation. When the souls of all mankind shall be assembled before the judgment-seat of Christ, none may appeal from that tribunal, upon the plea that they never considered the law of God proposed for their acceptance, nor made any choice of religion. The not having done so, is itself a sin deserving of punishment.

There are various grounds of conviction and belief, upon which religion may be embraced. All men are not affected in like manner by the same arguments and motives; but there must always be conviction and belief; there must always be a choice. If religion be embraced at all, it must be both by the understanding and the heart. It requires sacrifices; it promises rewards: the will must be interested in the question; and therefore there must be a choice. We say, then, that unless a man have *chosen* his religion, he has, in fact, no available religion at all; and we fear this is the case with too many persons in the world. It is to be feared, that there are many who have

never seriously laid this question to heart, "What must we do to be saved?" for that is, in fact, the same thing as considering what religion we shall choose.

When Christianity was a new religion, and before it was firmly established and extensively received; while the profession of the Gospel was attended with great peril of persecution, and even of death, those persons who embraced it did so upon deliberate consideration and conviction; it was with them a matter of the most serious and determined choice. On the one hand, Jesus Christ invited them to escape from the wrath to come; to repent and believe in Him, and be saved. On the other hand, the world held out, not only its present enjoyments to those who adhered to it, but its menaces of poverty and persecution to those who renounced it; and, although many remained in the service of the world, without paying any attention to the message delivered to them from God, yet all who *did* take up the Cross, must have done so from conviction and choice. But no such alternative is now presented

to those who live in a country which has for many ages received the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christianity is no longer persecuted; it is not even denied or called in question, except by a few miserable sinners, who have no influence upon public opinion. So that, in fact, there is no question raised; at least men are not compelled to make an open choice between Christianity and any other religion. But one evil consequence which results from this general and unresisted predominance of Christianity is this: that men become Christians as a matter of course, without inquiring why they are so, and, consequently, without a thorough understanding of that great and vital truth, that "*there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may be saved*, but only the name of the Lord Jesus."

Now, we maintain that religion is still a matter of choice. If you are not called upon to choose between Christianity and Paganism, or any other false religion, yet still you must make your election between Christ and the world, between a carnal and a spiritual state; and it must be a

deliberate choice, made after a due consideration of the advantages which each has to offer, or, at least, from a sincere feeling of heart, which prompts you to prefer one to the other. A state of careless neutrality is not permitted: "He that is not with me," said our Saviour, "is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." (Matthew xii. 30.) He who is not *decidedly* a Christian, is no Christian at all, at least as far as his own prospects of salvation are concerned. All attempts to compromise the question, and to serve Christ just so far as his service does not interfere with that of the world, will be fruitless: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Yet we see too much reason to fear that this is the actual state of a very great number of professing Christians. They are well content to bear that name, and see no reason why they should lay it aside. It subjects them to no particular inconvenience; they take good care that it shall not debar them from any of the profitable or honourable things of this world, nor from many of its customary pleasures. They attend, with

decent regularity, the ordinances of their religion, except such as they imagine may require of them a more than ordinary degree of self-denial; and thus they endeavour to make Christianity, which is the purest, the most uncompromising, the most heart-controlling of all religions, compatible with just as much pleasure and indulgence as is not inconsistent with outward decency. This profane hypocrisy, or, to call it by a gentler name, this miserable self-deceit, in the most important of all concerns, arises simply from this, that such men have never made choice of their religion. They never " choose whom they will serve."

Ask of yourselves whether it be not so. To some at least of those who hear me, I may propose the question, Have you ever, since you have arrived at years of discretion, applied yourselves in good earnest to consider whether you should embrace religion or not? Have you ever taken a careful and deliberate survey of the various paths which profess to conduct mankind to happiness, and selected that which leads to life eternal? When was it that you retired within yourselves,

to meditate upon the certainty of your being accountable to an almighty and omniscient God for every part of your conduct, and to consider by what methods you might hope to escape from his just indignation? Did you ever say to yourselves, "I know that I must inevitably go either to heaven or to hell; that the straight path and the wide way are both before me to choose, and that choose I must. I know that I may be saved by Jesus Christ; for he is 'the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Him' (John xiv. 6); but then I must come unto Him heartily and resolutely. I am sure that I cannot be saved by the world; because the world and all that it contains will pass away, and the 'very elements will melt with fervent heat,' when my soul shall receive its eternal doom from the mouth of the supreme Judge. Nothing can make amends to me for the loss of life eternal; for 'what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' (Matthew xvi. 26.) On the other hand, if I determine to embrace the Gospel, and to follow Jesus Christ, I

know that I must submit to many temporal inconveniences; to much self-denial at least, perhaps to much endurance, and many costly sacrifices. Can I make up my mind to relinquish those indulgences, for which the natural man pleads so strongly, rather than injure the welfare of my immortal soul? Can I resolve to despise the scoffs of profane companions, the false opinions of the world, the sordid pursuit of gain, the charms of convivial intercourse, the reputation of talent, and more than all this, rather than swerve, in the slightest degree, from my Christian integrity? Can I do all this? and, what is more, do I feel, in the very depth of my heart, my own sinfulness of nature and infirmity of purpose? Am I prepared to lay aside all overweening confidence in my own wisdom and goodness, and to "receive with meekness" the revealed Word and will of God, and his free, unrequited mercy; and to seek for his grace by all the appointed means? Dare I engage myself, by a solemn compact and covenant with the Searcher of hearts, to do or to attempt all this? Shall I

make religion my choice, and from henceforth consign myself unreservedly and implicitly to the service of Jesus Christ, and the guidance of his Holy Spirit? Yes, verily, by God's help I will."

Have any such thoughts as these at any time occupied your minds, and produced their due impression on your hearts? Some process of this kind must be gone through, before your religion can be such as may be depended upon; before you can be genuine, consistent disciples of that Master who claims your best affections, your undivided allegiance. This is an act of choice; such an act as will be likely to fix religious principles in your heart, to fit it for the reception of grace, and to prepare you for every good word and work. The want of such an act is discernible in the inconsistency of men's practice with their outward profession of the Gospel, their cold and heartless prayers, their unfrequent and negligent reading of God's Word, their disregard of his ordinances, their excessive love of pleasure and amusement, or their exclusive devotion to

worldly business. Whensoever these symptoms are plainly discoverable, *there* has been no *choice* of religion.

But, again I repeat it, the choice must be made. It *must* be made some time or other. If it has been forgotten or neglected in early life, it must be made at a later period, and *will* be made when once the heart is really touched with a sense of its own condition and its wants. But it *ought* undoubtedly to be made in the morning of life—as soon as the reason is sufficiently matured to discern between good and evil. One of the most touching features of the commendation bestowed by St Paul upon his youthful friend is this: "From a child thou hast known the Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy iii. 15.)

Faculty and Disposition.

[MOBERLY.]

WE enter this life with faculties, we pass out of it with dispositions. The situations in which we

are placed, the circumstances by which we are surrounded, various though they seem to us, unfavourable, as we sometimes foolishly think them, to our progress in holiness, are alike in this, that they give scope and room for the exercising of all our powers, for cultivating our habits, for imbuing our minds with strong dispositions. Every man, from the highest to the lowest, in active life or in retirement, in civilisation or ignorance, finds in the world around him the materials of a temper of content or discontent, meekness or arrogance, purity or filthiness, humility or pride. We are not cast, like the plants of some other planet, upon a spot where there is no soil nor atmosphere suitable to our natural organisation. From our birth to our death, every year transforms the being of mere faculties and single feelings, into one of character more formed, disposition more inveterate, habit more invincible. Acts are the steps of this progress, acts are the exhibitions, the natural energies of the dispositions formed. "Habits," says Jeremy Taylor, "are the daughters of actions; but then they nurse their mother, and produce daughters

after her image, but far more beautiful and prosperous." As such, the acts are most important and indispensable to us; on them depends everything, for without them there are no dispositions. But it is in the dispositions themselves that we see the object of all this process. It is the habituated mind, the subdued and perfected character of holiness, for which we seek. It is the ardent love of God, as a state of mind and feeling cultivated by the Holy Spirit of God, with which we must hope to pass into God's presence. It is the high Christian virtue of habitual faith, clothed in which we shall be fit to enter the regions of light!

The earthly situations and circumstances which have given the opportunity and means of cultivating our dispositions, will shortly fade and disappear from around us. The individual acts by which our habits were attained, by which, when attained, they were displayed and confirmed, will be past and gone. Do I mean that our acts shall then be forgotten? God forbid! By them, the register of our hearts, we shall be justified, and by them condemned. Not only shall every act of

charity and piety have left a beautiful hue upon the character never to be obliterated, but, by God's especial mercy, it shall be expressly rewarded. Not only shall the remembrance of it be lovely, but it shall itself lay up, through God's compassionate love in Christ, a store of happiness for us. "Verily," the Judge shall say to us—"verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

But our earthly deeds shall then be past. Our immortal souls shall enter upon their immortality, clad in their garb of perfected dispositions. They are to be the faculties of the new life. They are to be the capacities of new deeds and new enjoyments. Produced on earth by the Spirit of God aiding, by the Son of God holding forth the example, they shall be found the wedding-garment to fit us to be guests at the marriage of the Lamb!

What are to be the delights of that state we know not, probably we cannot know. How our love of God, which this state is fitted to cultivate, shall there be occupied; in what exercises or ener-

gies of heavenly adoration, if man has ever known, it was not lawful for man to utter. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Thus much only we know, that of the various trials and probationary states in which we are placed, this is the last and crowning one. With our death there is an end of growth. Habituation is the business of this life. Here we may learn to love God. As our love is perfected either towards God or the world, so shall we depart either into everlasting punishment, or everlasting life. He who is infinite is the only adequate object of the love which is to be eternal, and "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

What, then, is the conclusion to which we are led? It is that to which the language of Holy Scripture continually directs us, from which the mistaken guidance of a false philosophy would as continually divert us—that "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." His commandments and his example descend to the de-

tails of our common life. There let us work while it is yet day.

Let every effort of duty be sanctified by daily, fervent, unintermitted prayer. Let every prayer display itself in watchful, eager, humble efforts to do our duty. And with the Holy Spirit of God to strengthen and support us, with the Son of God to hold before us the ensample of a perfect life, the love of God shall surely grow up within our souls, and we shall be the blessed of our Father, and receive the kingdom which has been prepared for us from the beginning of the world.

The Aim of Life.

[VAUGHAN.]

HE whose object in life it is to serve his generation by the will of God, has a great work before him even after his first choice is made. He has a daily, an unceasing conflict to wage with the two evil spirits of selfishness and of ungodliness. He chose his calling in life with a resolute defiance of both. He chose it out of regard to God

and to his fellow-creatures. He chose it that he might please God, and do good to man. How great a work is it, to go on steadfastly in the path on which he thus has entered! To bear constantly in mind the inestimable importance of setting a really high and Christian example; to be never slothful in business, yet at the same time always fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; to get rid entirely of the notion of living for pleasure, and cultivate in its place a fixed habit of doing everything in the name of Christ, and in a spirit of thankfulness to God; to be ready to avow himself a servant of Christ, by acting manifestly on those unworldly, unselfish principles which Christ alone teaches, and by discountenancing, as opportunity offers, in conversation also, those false maxims which still abound everywhere, even in a world calling itself Christian; to act thus, humbly, consistently, fearlessly—and more especially in those professions which are directly concerned only in secular matters; this is, indeed, a great and arduous work—a work which few ever set themselves earnestly to fulfil, but which some, by God's

blessing, are performing in this our day, and which He requires of all who would be owned by him at his coming.

Nor do I believe that there is any one amongst the ordinary professions of the higher classes in our own country, in which such a life is impossible. If there were, unquestionably into that profession no man who cares for his soul could enter. But, though the difficulties in the way of leading a Christian life may be, as doubtless they are, greater in one calling than in another, experience amply warrants the belief that there is no profession—not even those which, in common estimation, are held to be the least religious, and into which, consequently, men of strongly religious feeling most rarely enter—in which a man may not serve his generation according to God's will, and fall asleep at last in Christ. Only let him enter into it, whatsoever it be, in a watchful spirit—the happier the more he fears; enter it as the calling which God has marked out for him, and with the earnest resolution to remember God in it; and we may well hope that he will either be kept safe in

it, or in due time brought safely out of it. And if, on the other hand, we do not so; if we rush into a profession without seeking counsel from God; then, though it be of all the safest or the holiest, for us it will be ruinous and not salutary; entering it without God, he will leave us in it; and then all alike work death.

This, then, brings me to that great consideration, without which the subject before us would be at last most misleading. There is but one way in which a man can serve his generation according to God's will. There is but one safeguard for any of us, even in the quietest, and the humblest, and least seductive calling. Without this, no real good can be done to others; without this, we shall be utterly unable to maintain a consistent example, or to stand fast in that day of temptation, which in each single case is commensurate with life itself. Call this safeguard by what name you will, the essence of it is the same. If we believe one word of God's revelation in Christ, we know that without Christ we can do nothing. We know that God, out of boundless mercy, has

given Christ to be the life of our souls—to be first our way to God, and then our life in him. God has been very gracious to us in bearing with us till this day—in still calling us to Him through his Son. Till we love Him as our Father in Jesus Christ, we can never be at peace; we can never resist sin; we can never please God; we can never serve our generation by his will. We are at enmity against Him still; still crucifying his Son daily; still daily grieving that Holy Spirit who will not strive with us for ever.

The Object of Life.

[JULIUS C. HARE.]

THE whole of our earthly life is a never-ending, still-beginning lesson, that we are designed to live for others, not for ourselves. For suppose that we were to live solely for ourselves; suppose that the heart of selfishness were not stretched so far in all men as to embrace the offspring of their own bodies; suppose that our parents, our nurses, our teachers, every one through whose kind ministra-

tions we have grown up to be what we are, had lived altogether for themselves, what would have become of us? Should we ever have risen from our cradle? should we ever have had a cradle to rise from? Surely our first moment would have been our last. We should have been drowned like so many puppies or kittens. *Throw the noisy, troublesome brat into a ditch!* would be the father's cry, the first time his babe squealed, even if the mother had not strangled it beforehand for giving her so much pain. Yes, assuredly, the whole of our early life is a never-ending, still-beginning lesson of love. Only through love, according to that sacred law whereby mankind are increased, only through love, unless that law has been foully outraged, do we even come into the world. We come into the world a burden and grievous pain to our mothers: but through the love which God has planted in a mother's heart, and which makes her rejoice in living more for her child than for herself, this burden and pain are turned into pleasures. When we have come into the world, still it is only through love, through long, patient,

watchful, unwearied love, that we can grow up from the helplessness of infancy, through the feebleness of childhood, and the many dangers which beset youth, to the strength of riper years. So all-important, indeed, is this one lesson, that every other lesson, according to the laws of nature, ought to teach us this also. The child that sucks the milk from its mother's breast, is made to suck in the love of its mother along with it. Every meal it eats should teach it to love those who feed it: indeed, even brute animals do so. Every game of its childhood should teach it to love its playmates. Every lesson it learns should teach it to love those who are so kind as to take the trouble of training it up in the ways of knowledge and understanding.

Moreover, even after we have come to the full growth of manhood, it is still utterly impossible for any person to live wholly for himself; at least, unless he withdraws from the world, and shuts himself up in a cell, or a wilderness. But this is an act so contrary to the appetites, and, indeed, to the very constitution of our nature, that hardly

anybody would frame such a design, unless with a purpose of living, not for himself, but for God. In their ordinary condition, as living together in the world, men have numberless wants, which bind them together, and make them dependent on each other. We want our brethren to help us in all manner of ways, to protect us from injury and violence, and to supply us with all that we need. This help, which, during the period of our entire helplessness, was given to us freely through the stirrings of natural affection, we cannot obtain, when we are grown up, except by helping others in turn. He who has been trained, as we have seen, during infancy, and childhood, and youth, to love others by such manifold ties, is forced, when he passes out of the state of helplessness, to do something in the way of helping others, whatever his station may be, and whether he will or no: the richest man on earth cannot live without the ministries of his poorer brethren; nor can he gain their help, except by making them in some measure sharers in his riches. Indeed, the richer he is, the greater number of his brethren will he need to

minister to him; and the greater number, therefore, will he himself be compelled to minister to. Every fresh enjoyment he wishes to draw from his wealth, brings a fresh necessity of imparting it to others. In like manner the various trades are forced to help each other, and cannot avoid doing so, because they want help, and could never get on without it. Indeed, the very reason why, as society multiplies and advances, men are set apart for different trades is, because by such a division they will help each other far more than each man could ever help himself by following every trade at once.

. . . . . .

Thus we see that the whole order of nature, the order of man's natural life, and the order of society, bear witness to the purpose of God, that men should not live for themselves, but for one another. According to that order, it is necessary, for the very preservation of our own life, that we should minister to others; and as men become more civilised, they are bound together by a greater number of mutual ties. So entirely, indeed, is this the case, that Satan, after his wont, has tried

to pervert this truth into the means of supporting and spreading his own falsehoods. Seeing that man is so framed and constituted, that he cannot even exist without the help of others, and is thus absolutely compelled to minister to them, Satan persuades us that the only reason which leads us to minister to others, is the good we hope to gain for ourselves: he persuades us that this is so, and ought to be so. Thus he sets up selfishness as of right and necessity the ruling principle in our hearts, and would make us believe that it is rightfully the ruling principle, and the one spring of all activity and energy, in the world. I will not enter here into an argument to prove how utterly false, how repugnant to the constitution of man and of society, this doctrine of the father of lies is. It is enough for us to know that, if this doctrine were true, the whole of Christianity would be an idle fiction, an empty dream. It is enough for us in this place to recollect the words of the text, in which St Paul, speaking of Christians, declares, that *none of us liveth to himself.*

The Christian, we are told in the text, must not live for himself. In this, as in all things, he must endeavour to fashion himself after the perfect pattern set before him by his Heavenly Lord and Master. For Jesus also lived not to himself, but to God, not seeking his own happiness, his own good, but the happiness and good of all mankind. Indeed, this was the very purpose for which He left his throne in the heavens, and became man, and died a cruel death upon the cross: not to live to himself, but to God, and to mankind; and this not merely now and then, at certain seasons of special exertion, but always, and in all things. It was to do the will of God that He came into the world; and in doing the will of God He spent his whole life, in doing and in suffering it. This was his meat and drink. Even when a child, He quitted all other things to do his Father's business. From the first to the last hour of his life, He never did anything for himself, not even what all the rest of mankind do of necessity, and therefore allowably. Whatever He did was for the showing forth of God's glory, and mercy, and love, and for

the sake of leading men to become partakers of that mercy and love, and thus heirs and showers forth of that glory. You remember how, when He was an hungered after his long fast in the wilderness, the tempter would have persuaded Him to turn the stones into bread; yet He would not; not because He had not the power of working such a miracle, He who afterward fed the five thousand in the wilderness with the five loaves and the two fishes; but because He would not work miracles for himself; He would only work them for others. He would not work them to relieve himself after a long fast; but He wrought them to relieve others after a short one; teaching his disciples thereby, that, while they were to be careless about their own temporal wants and condition, they were not to be careless, but on the contrary desirous and diligent, to relieve the temporal wants, and to promote even the temporal well-being, of others, so far as this may be done without neglect of higher obligations. Thus did Jesus live to God, only doing his own will, so far as his will was one with the will of God; and, in living to God, He also lived to

mankind. In showing forth the glory of God, He showed forth God's wonderful love to mankind; and this love was also his own love, a love so great that He came down from heaven expressly in order to die for mankind.

This, my brethren, is the example set before us, to the end that we may follow it in all things, may strive after it all our lives: and thus we shall not live to ourselves. Indeed, whether we attempt to follow this blessed example or no, the only way in which we can really live for ourselves, for our own highest, immortal selves, is by living for God, and for our brethren. It is only by losing our lives, that we can find them—by losing our carnal, selfish life, that we can find our heavenly life with Christ in God. For this you should ever keep in mind, that, whether we live for ourselves or no, it is most certain that we cannot die for ourselves. When the shadow of this world passes away, the mask of self will drop off; and then it will be seen for whom we have been really living. Even in this life, by trying to live for ourselves, we dry up the fountainhead of every blessing;

we turn our life into a barren waste, with nothing rising out of it but heaps of sand, one of which at length stifles and chokes us. We pile up weariness and vexation, and ceaseless discontent and repining for ourselves in this world; and the only store we lay up for the world to come is everlasting bitterness and wo. For when the mask of self drops off, then we shall find that we have been all our lives under a blinding delusion; that the self for which we supposed ourselves to be working, which we have been caressing, and indulging, and pampering, and fattening, has only been a mask of Satan; that, in fact, we have been living all the while for him; that we have been working in his mines; that we have been grinding in his mill; and that, while we deemed ourselves our own lords and masters, we were nothing but his bondsmen and slaves.

Such, brethren, will assuredly be the end of those who live for themselves. They will find that they have been living for the carcase which rots, and for the worm which devours it. How blessed, on the other hand, will be the portion of

those for whom, when the shadow of this world passes away, the true abiding reality will come forth, and who, having lived by faith, will have their faith turned into sight! They will see Him in whom they have believed, and for whom they have lived; and having lived for Him already under the darkness and amid the phantoms of this perishable life, they will live henceforward for Him and with Him for ever in the pure light of heaven, ministering to Him in all things, and interchanging unintermitting ministrations of love with the whole communion of saints.



CHAPTER II.

COMMON DANGERS AND DIFFICULTIES.

A Man's Mendings of Himself!

[TRENCH.]

. . . NOTHING but faith in a sacrifice, in the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice, will enable men to do this—to draw near to God. For all men in the deepest centre of their being feel, that what they need is something which shall enable them to look entirely away from themselves, and entirely unto some other for the ground of their acceptance. The heathen felt this; and all his propitiations, and expiations, and placatory offerings, were dim gropings after it. The Jew felt this, and the blood of bulls and of goats which he offered were weak prophecies of it. The Christian feels it, and the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all, is the perfect fulfilling of this longing. All have

alike felt that there must be some such ground *out* of a man's self, and beyond him, on which he must rest. For what will all a man's mendings of himself do, as affording the materials of a reconciliation? When once the awful vision of a holy God has flashed upon his soul, never again to be put by, when once the idea of law, and of the transgression of a law, have been revealed unto him, and (which is the same thing) when once the abysmal deeps of his own sinfulness have yawned beneath his feet, how idle then doth everything of his own appear for the repairing of the past, for the knitting again the bands of the broken communion with his God! His works! as well might he seek to fill a bottomless pit with pebbles thrown into it one by one, or to pay off at one end a debt with pence, which was accumulating by talents at the other. His works! he cannot so far lie to himself as to believe that they can be better than the source out of which they flow, and that source is unhealed as yet. The deed cannot be better than the man that does the deed: it may be worse, for it may spring not from what is best, but from

what is worst within him; but better than himself it cannot be: the water cannot rise higher than its spring; the corrupt tree, according to the miserable necessity of its most inward being, must bring forth corrupt fruit—fruit after its own kind; from the unhealed fountains of life nothing but bitter waters can well forth.

Vain is it, then, for a man to seek in himself the grounds of a restored and renewed intercourse with his God. His doings and his strivings leave him where he was, or leave him further off than before. His sin cleaves to him still, and all his efforts to disengage himself from it serve only to cause it to cling to him the closer: it is to him as the poisoned garment which we read that a fabled hero in an evil hour had put on, and then strove to tear away, but in vain; he could only tear away his own flesh. So doth this gift of hell, this consciousness of sin, cling like a robe of agony to the sinner: in an evil hour he hath clothed himself with it, and now it appears to have become part of himself, eating into and poisoning the very sources of his life, and yet he cannot rid himself

of it; he must wear it, as it seems, through a miserable eternity.

And thus it remains with him, till he has learned the meaning of the word "sacrifice," till he has learned to see that the first ground of his peace must be, not in the doing something himself, but in the acquiescing in something that has been done for him, till, looking unto Christ and to his one sacrifice for the putting away of sin, he is enabled to look at his own sin as an alien thing, as something separable, yea, separated from himself, no longer cleaving to him and defiling him and all that he thinks or does, but put at a distance from him; which henceforth he will contemplate, indeed, for shame and for humiliation, but which he will no longer feel to be part of his own most inmost being. For He who is the Word of God, sharper than any two-edged sword, has divided between him and it, so that it shall no longer be as his very self. And thus through faith in his sacrifice the man is put in a condition to draw nigh unto God, unto that living God who must be served in a living manner, who only can truly

be served by men whose consciences are purged from dead works, who have no longer a clinging, cleaving sense of defilement, but who have, by his Son and by his offering for them, been made perfect as pertaining the conscience. They may not, they cannot indeed yet be perfect as pertaining their life and work, though to that they are ever tending—that is the glorious end which they shall one day reach, if not here, yet there. But already as pertaining the conscience they are perfect: and so in the way of becoming perfect in all else—justified that they may be sanctified—the two lines, of the righteousness which is imputed unto them, and the holiness which they have realised, starting, indeed, with a wide space between them, yet ever tending to a union; and one day to meet, and to run on as one through eternity.

The Neglect of Religious Advantages.

[GLEIG.]

THE master who distributes his talents, is our God, and we are the servants to whom these talents are committed. To one five are intrusted, to an-

other two, and to another only one. In a primary sense, there is no doubt that our Lord referred, in this discourse, to the different situations in which his own immediate followers and the rest of their countrymen stood. To the twelve he had ever spoken openly; they, therefore, knew that he was the Messiah, and knowing this, they enjoyed the higher portion of five talents; whereas the people in general, to whom he addressed himself only in parables, could be said to have been put in possession only of one. Still it was the business of all parties to use their talents aright; and if they who had gotten but one could not make ten out of it, at least they ought to have made two. This, however, they did not do, and the punishment fell upon them. In a secondary sense, again, the story has reference to all mankind, in all quarters of the world. Of us who live in this enlightened country, it may safely be said that we possess five talents, when compared with the ignorant and benighted of other nations, who hold two, or it may be only one: let us be careful to make a good use of our superior advantages. Again, it applies

to different individuals in the same nation, who fill different stations in society, possess different degrees of knowledge, and the power of doing good. He who has been baptised into the religion of Christ, and has had frequent opportunities of receiving instruction in the way of holiness, as well as of reading the sacred Scriptures; if such a man choose to go wrong, there is no excuse for him: he has thrown away five talents, and for the loss of five talents he will be called to account. In like manner, he who possesses none of these advantages, who has not learned to read, who has seen no examples before him but those which lead to evil: to that man only one talent has been intrusted, and for one only will he be held *responsible*. But for that one he *will* be held *responsible;* and let him remember that the responsibility imposed by the possession of even one talent is not light. Nor should I forget to add, that the parable has reference likewise to the means and opportunities which men enjoy of doing good to those around them, by their money, their advice, and most of all by their example. It is not enough for any one of

us to abstain from evil; we must all, as far as God has given us the means, strive to do good; because it is in proportion to the active usefulness of our lives, not less than to their freedom from vice, that we shall be rewarded or punished in a world beyond the grave.

Let every one of us, then, strive to do his best, let him who is conscious of possessing much, endeavour to do much good with it. Let him who feels that he has little, not suffer that little to lie idle; and, above all things, let us beware of ourselves. Let us take care lest indolence, or carelessness, or, it may be, self-confidence, gain the mastery over us. Put we not off till to-morrow the work which ought to be performed to-day; and let us not go to meet our Lord unprovided with that oil of grace, which alone must keep alive the flame of holiness and piety, and insure us a blessed welcome. In one word, let us, in humble reliance on the Divine assistance, strive to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and God will not fail to further our efforts with his grace, and to crown them with his glory.

The Dull Ear.

[VAUGHAN.]

(Preached in the Chapel of Harrow School.)

THERE is a right and a wrong in hearing as well as in speaking. It is not everything that we are charged to be swift to hear. There are many things which it is better not to hear; which it shows no Christian spirit to desire or even to consent to hear. It is the Word of God, as St James calls it, which a Christian should be "swift to hear."

The Word of God! What glorious things are here said of it! It is that by which God begets us; by which He brings us into a new world, in which we already live the life to which the children of the resurrection are destined. It is that which, when engrafted in the heart, is able to save the soul.

Now, of which of us, my brethren, can it be said, with any truth, that we are "swift to hear" this word? We have many opportunities of doing so. It is preached to us weekly. We are

instructed in its meaning—it is read to us daily. All of us possess it, in its fulness and in its integrity, in the Holy Scriptures. Which of us, I again ask, is swift to hear it? Is there, on the whole, any book to which, considering its commonness among us, we turn so rarely of our own choice, or give to its contents so little heed?

Let us reflect a little upon this fact, and its causes.

Here is in our possession a book—for in the Bible, I need not say, that which was once an oral message, sent by the lips of living men, is now written down—not, indeed, in the form of a direct message to us, but in a great variety of methods substantially embodied, so that no one who reads that book attentively can miss the leading features and particulars of the original message—here is, I say, in our possession a book, which we all believe to contain a message from God to his world; a message, in other words, from our Creator, our Ruler, and our Judge; from One against whom we have deeply sinned, and in whose absolute power we are; yet who has been

pleased, in his great mercy, neither to condemn us at once, nor to leave us without hope—one hope—of forgiveness, restoration, and happiness.

This surely is no exaggeration. It is a simple statement of a truth which we all believe. Such is our condition originally and actually. Such is God's language and aspect towards us. We know it. And we know also the momentous consequences which depend upon our present conduct towards that very message which this book contains. We know that he who (in God's sense of the term) believes that message will be eternally saved, and that he who trifles with it will be eternally lost.

Now, should we not suppose that, this being our position—so dangerous, so precarious, so critical-- we should all be "swift to hear" that which tells us of life and salvation?

Yet, in reality, nothing interests us so little. We can read other books late and early; books which tell us, I do not say of the present life only —short and transitory as is its longest duration, comparatively unimportant as are its grandest and

most exciting scenes—but of the very lowest, and meanest, and most trifling of all life's incidents, nay, alas! of the most wicked and sinful of all life's corruptions: it matters not how trifling or how injurious a book may-be; this we never take into account as any objection to its perusal: it is only the Word of God—only the book which tells us of that which alone is valuable or urgent—this is the only book which possesses for us no interest: this the book which is laid on the shelf, or used only as a task, or which, at the very best, is read but formally and perfunctorily, and laid aside not only without an effort, but with a positive sense of relief.

I do not for an instant doubt that there are those amongst us, my brethren—God grant they may be many—whose feeling towards his Word is different from that I have described. But I speak of the multitude both of men and of boys, when I say that, so far from being swift to hear or to read, they are conscious of a real repugnance to the employment, and guilty in practice of the greatest possible neglect of it.

How, then, is this? Must we not fear that the same reason which St Paul assigns for the veiling of his gospel from some hearts, is no less in our days the cause of the same result: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

It is not that the message of God is less true or less important than it declares itself to be; but there is a counter-influence at work upon the hearts of men, which succeeds but too generally in making them insensible to the truths on which their salvation hangs.

Judge yourselves, my brethren, as in God's sight, and can you not readily detect the nature of that spell which binds you?

Are you not practically forgetting that this world is not, cannot be, your home? Yes, you say to yourselves—it is natural at your age, at every age, to say so—"I have much goods laid up for many years; I may take my ease, eat, drink, and be merry." For the present, nothing is so

interesting, nothing seems so important, as the life that now is; and yet, a few years hence, even before middle age, how little will your present interests have become in your own eyes. You will be astonished that you could ever have been engrossed by them; just as you would now look down upon the toys or the pleasures of childhood. Such is our snare, such our folly, all through this life: we ascribe an importance to the present, which we shall ourselves marvel at when the present has become the past. And oh, if we have indeed suffered the present—the fleeting changing present—to occupy our hearts for the time being, shall we not be condemned by our own hearts, as well as by God's judgment, when we look back upon these successive presents from a world where they will all alike be seen in their proper insignificance?

But so long as this is so, it is of itself amply sufficient to account for our slowness to hear the Word of God. That Word speaks to us of things which as yet are nothing to us. What does it promise as the reward of obedience? Pleasures

for which we have no taste. What does it threaten as the consequence of neglect? Sufferings which as yet seem to us no privation; exclusion from a presence which we have no desire to enter, from joys the very nature of which we can neither appreciate nor conceive.

But in how many hearts is there to be found, besides this engrossing attention to things present, some definite root of bitterness which accounts but too sufficiently for a positive repugnance to God's message! No heart can, indeed, be long empty: if the Holy Spirit be not there, sought, and cherished, and obeyed, the spirit of evil must, as a necessary alternative, be its inmate; and that spirit will, ere long, shape itself in some more definite form, defiling its dwelling-place with acts as well as thoughts of unholiness. Then, indeed, that distaste for God's Word, which was at first a mere indifference springing out of lightness and carelessness of spirit, will have become positive, determined, and resolute; a hatred of the light because the conscience is evil, and because it is intolerable to abide even for a moment in a presence so

dazzling and so uncongenial. The holiness of God dwells in his Word bodily: everything there speaks of Him: there is in the Bible no toleration of worldly maxims, of indolent excuses, of unworthy motives, of selfish, self-interested, or self-indulgent desires: and although, therefore, the consciousness of past guilt, of lingering sin, of pervading weakness, is no bar to the enjoyment of that Word which presupposes, and has a remedy for, all these, yet the cherishing of any one known sin is: for this the Word of God makes no allowance: it states the question as one of life and death; a question between present suffering, present self-denial, and eternal misery and ruin; a question whether we prefer the cutting off of a right hand, the plucking out of a right eye, in this life—a process painful, protracted, agonising, if need be, yet of known, and definite, and endurable extent and amount—or the everlasting gnawing of a worm that never dieth, in a world where there is no change and no amendment for ever. On this point, therefore, there must be a clear judgment, a decided choice: he who would come to God, he who

would hear God's voice, he who would delight himself in God's book, must have made up his mind, let what will happen, to save his soul; to give up, consequently, that which would destroy his soul, even though it should cost him a severe, a most painful, struggle and conflict: he must come with what is called in Scripture a single eye—that is, a clear and a resolved intention—to the study of the record of life, even though he cannot come with a self-righteous or self-confident assurance that his life has been blameless or his heart pure.

The Dangers of Science.

[HUSSEY.]

THE tendency of the present age is certainly not towards superseding the authority of Scripture by pretending a new Revelation: neither, on the whole, does the balance of opinion seem to incline towards an absolute rejection of Revelation, but rather, God be thanked, towards an increasing acknowledgment of it. But the case of the Gnostics, as an illustration of the workings of the

human mind, furnishes a parallel, in some respects, which may be instructive. The Gnostic system was the result of a struggle between the speculations of human reason, and the authority of Revelation; when men had given up the heathen principle which denied all Revelation, but had not yet learned submission to the Word of God, as the final law of truth to the intellect; and so they professed to believe; but believed what they liked to think for themselves. As Gnosticism succeeded heathenism *then*, a philosophic age has *now* succeeded an age of infidelity. The labours of those who defended the faith against the swarm of free-thinkers and sceptical writers of the last century were by God's mercy successful; and the consequence has been a gradual return and a growing willingness in the world to confess the unreasonableness at least, if not the wickedness, of unbelief. But as formerly the science of the age, even after professing to believe, still disputed the ascendency of revealed truth, and refused to stoop for that knowledge which requires from all, as the first step, that they shall *become as little children*, so we must

be aware that at all times not every profession of belief is necessarily *belief of the truth*, and that science and philosophic habits of thought have their peculiar difficulties and dangers, which may be felt now, as heretofore.

I do not speak here of the chance of forgetting the end in the pursuit of the means; although this is an obvious temptation in every study, and is most seductive when the subject is the most sublime, and the theory of it the most refined. For although, doubtless, many have allowed their thoughts to be too much engrossed with the wonders of creation, and the beauty of the material world, until they might have seemed to think there was no higher aim of man's life than the knowledge of those things, rather than the knowledge of the Author of them (which knowledge is shared by the simplest mind in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells), although this is a danger to which all are liable, it is nevertheless so apparent, being contrary to the first principles of religious faith, that no one can be carried away by it without being conscious of it; and so many corrections

are at hand in all the ordinances and outward means of religion, that all persons, if they are but candid with their own consciences, can at once do much to remedy any evil tendency of this kind in their minds.

Neither do I allude to supposed discrepancies between the Scriptures and any results of physical science or literature: for I believe that all these will vanish upon a better understanding of the subject, as some have done which were thought to be great difficulties at first.

But I speak of the submission of the reason to the revealed Word of God in all things; which is a duty, that naturally becomes more difficult as the reason attains to more insight into the field of nature, and acquires in proportion greater confidence in its own powers, and that seems to be (rather than really is) most difficult when knowledge of many subjects is extending itself on all sides. For then the question arises, whether this is not a claim to keep the knowledge of the highest things stationary at one point, while all other knowledge, it is said, is advancing: and the doubt

occurs, whether this can be true knowledge; or if it be so, it is tacitly inferred that it must be inferior to other knowledge, if indeed it be knowledge at all: and thus both the study and the knowledge of the subjects of Revelation are not uncommonly looked down upon in an intellectual point of view.

But all the discoveries of physical science, great and wonderful as they are, do but fill up the particulars of that which has been revealed before. The knowledge of the whole material world would be only the realisation of the idea, *O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in wisdom hast Thou made them all* (Psalm civ. 24), and therefore no discovery of this can go beyond the primitive truth in its full and proper meaning.

In other departments of knowledge, progress which is not founded on certain observation and extended experiments, might be no more than a change of opinion or a new phraseology; as perhaps is the case in some theories of moral and metaphysical philosophy.

But however this may be, the great moral truths which are the proper subject of Revelation,

are such as no time nor discovery of reason can change. The being and attributes of the Godhead: the design of his mercy to save mankind, through the operation of the Son and the Holy Spirit: man's relation to God; the end of his existence on earth; the proper employment of his faculties and business of his life; the mutual relationship of men to each other: these and their co-ordinate and subordinate truths are what has been revealed from the beginning, from the first Adam unto the last: and nothing new can be discovered of them, except by recurring always to the original principles; no truth can be added to what has been declared to be true, unless by being contained in it, as the conclusion is contained in the premises: and whatever is opposed to any truth contained in Revelation, is for that reason false. The Holy Spirit has expressed the truth in Scripture in words adequate to meet the widest extension of human ideas on all subjects: and to speak as if the wants of any age, or the attainments of any class, could outrun the plain letter of Revelation, seems to be simply impious.

The Duties of the Christian's Body.

[BISHOP WORDSWORTH.]

OUR body, then, my brethren, *if we* are Christians, will not be a scene of concession, and of compromise, but of war that bringeth peace. And the war that bringeth peace is a war of extermination, "that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Romans vi. 6.) Do we fear the battle as too hard for us, even now when the Spirit itself, the Lord and giver of life, is on our side? Are we still seeking to parley with our corrupt affections, rather than struggling to mortify and subdue them? Let us take a lesson from those who are less highly favoured than ourselves—the deaf and the dumb, the halt and the blind. With what efforts do they strive to remedy the *imperfections*, or to bear up against *the loss* of the sense in which they are deficient! What patience, what fortitude, what undaunted perseverance, do they exhibit! By what surprising expedients do they oftentimes overcome the defect, or compensate for

the organ of which they are deprived! And shall we, who have our senses perfect, exert less pains to purify and refine them? Is this our gratitude? Or shall we be content with an imperfect victory? Like Saul, shall we spare the best of the sheep and the oxen, and keep *the king*—the ruling passion, the favourite sin—alive? My brethren, this is not obeying the voice of Him whose name we bear. That voice has spoken to us from the mount, *clearly* and *plainly:* "If thine eye offend thee," if it is prone to look on forbidden objects, or delight in perusing what is vile, and lustful, and licentious, "pluck it out." "If thy hand" be violent or impure, or in any way a minister to ungodliness and wrong, or "if thy foot offend thee," running astray to forbidden haunts, "cut them off." Or if thy tongue be still "unruly," venting filthiness and ribaldry, or blaspheming God's holy name, by all your hopes of heaven, cut it out and cast it from thee! Such is the law of Christ, imposed upon all who are his members; and they only who observe the law abide in him. Spare the offending limb, and thou thyself art

become "as a branch that is cast off and withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (John xv. 6.) And the same law extends also to the undue practice or neglect of what is in itself lawful. Thy foot offends thee not only when it follows after forbidden things, but when it slackens in the pursuit of things required; when it runs at the call of pleasure, or halts and loiters at the call of God. Thy hand offends thee when it is "slothful in business;" when "what it findeth to do, it doeth not with its might" (Ecclesiastes ix. 10), zealously, devotedly, and cheerfully as to the Lord; when it suffers amusement to trespass upon the time of study, and postpones the work and duties of the day to its pleasures and amusements. Offences, indeed, such as these, in a community like ours, must needs come; but wo to him by whom the offence cometh. Yes, be assured, the law of Christ will one day vindicate itself. Even now, you may feel something of its force; not, perhaps, in the ordinary retribution of official punishment or disgrace, but in the severer penance of inward

dissatisfaction and remorse. Oh, that we might all learn the lesson of true happiness, which Christ and his laws can alone teach us! Oh, that we could see and know how little of real pleasure can consist with irregular indulgence, whether in kind or in degree! Oh, that we could understand that, as it is "graver hours that bring constraint," which alone can "sweeten liberty," so, if there be no constraint—if the liberty that we allow ourselves exceed the bounds of a just, a dutiful, and a Christian moderation—there is poison in the cup. It may be, you perceive it not; but, sooner or later, it will turn your laughter to mourning, and your joy to heaviness; and how often, even while the full goblet is in your hand, does it bubble up, when you least expect, to embitter the promised gratification of your sweetest draught!

On the Danger of Conformity to Foreign Customs.

[JELF.]

THE danger, which is common to all, is especially formidable in their case who have received vague,

and perhaps erroneous impressions as to the nature of national distinctions, and as to the degree of acquiescence which it is our duty to show towards customs varying from our own. The popular doctrine upon this subject is often embodied in a maxim, proverbially expressed in most languages, importing that the traveller should conform to the usages of the country which he visits; a maxim much to be commended under certain limitations, but as a universal rule most mischievous and false, one, in fact, which is sometimes perverted into an excuse for the commission of every sin. The exact limits of our duty may here be determined by the application of the general rule, that the text* does not forbid conformity to the *innocent* customs of such intercourse with society, as may be compatible with our duty, but that the moment such customs become even *questionable*, then conformity is to be withheld. The traveller who, in *matters of indifference*, captiously refuses acquiescence with

* "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. xii. 2.

those amongst whom he is sojourning, acts in a manner as unchristian as it is unwise. Every nation has its *innocent* peculiarities; and the wise man will not neglect, and still less despise them, because the origin often lies deep in the national characters, and is, therefore, a really useful subject of study; the Christian will cheerfully conform to them, upon the principle of self-denial, and with the view of extending the charities, which bind man to man, and of promoting, by this trifling sacrifice, a community of feeling throughout the whole family of Christ. But here our complaisance must end. If the proverb is construed to extend to such principles, or to such practice, either moral or religious, as are contrary to our profession, or hurtful to our souls, then it ceases to be the true Christian's guide. Such conformity would come within the apostle's intention, and no desire of pleasing, no idle curiosity, no fear of ridicule, should induce us to deviate *in the slightest degree* from the strict rule of our English forefathers, from the apostolical simplicity and truth of our church. This is a fixed point, at

which we may safely determine to make a stand. If we once pass it, there is no other assignable limit, and we may go on giving up one principle after another, till we utterly abandon our own character, and adopt the contradictory follies and vices of every climate, and of every class of society, in which we may happen to be placed. Indeed, if the maxim alluded to is carried to its fullest extent, it must lead to this absurdity, that the same traveller during his absence from home may be obliged to be a pirate among pirates, or a cannibal among cannibals, to worship the images of saints at Rome, the black stone at Mecca, the sacred cow in India, and the true God, only wherever a nation may be found to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Upon this principle, Daniel was wrong in defying the laws of the Medes and Persians, and in "kneeling upon his knees three times a-day, and praying, and giving thanks to God, as he did aforetime" (Daniel vi. 10); and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would have been fully justified in saving themselves from the fiery furnace, by worshipping the golden image

which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up (Daniel.ii. 18).

This, then, may be regarded as our general rule, that in matters not simply indifferent, we never allow ourselves abroad any license which we should deny ourselves at home, that we remain Englishmen in our moral and religious habits and principles, and that we never permit ourselves to think right or wrong mere conventional terms, which are relative to our own accidental position in the world. We are not here advocating a bigoted adherence to the prejudices of education, though even the eradication of honest prejudices must be attended with caution. If our principles are unfounded or unscriptural, let them be discarded; but do not let us suppose that what is wrong in England is right abroad.

Uncertainty of Human Fame.

[MILMAN.]

LET us turn to the desire of posthumous celebrity. "The assuring of a lasting reputation upon earth,

a motive so congenial to the vanity of human nature, often served to animate the courage of the martyr." Thus Gibbon. And after the successful establishment of Christianity, when a numerous body enshrined in their recollection, embalmed in their hymns, sanctified the relics, visited the sepulchre of the departed Christian, this feeling might, and unquestionably did excite the indiscreet, I had almost said unchristian ardour of those who wantonly provoked the persecutor to the crime of judicial murder, in order that they might secure the palm-crown of the martyr. But when Christianity could scarcely be said to exist, when it had as yet no single record, when there was every human probability that it could not last a century, the mind must indeed have been ardent, which could anticipate an immortality of fame from being the victim of some desultory fray between two parties of Jews in some obscure city, or from being cast, one of a gladiatorial hecatomb, to the beasts of the arena. I cannot indeed but be awestruck at the erring calculations of human ambition. The fate of the

early Christians, and their more distinguished contemporaries, preaches a forcible admonition on the uncertainty with which after-ages award their admiration, and disappoint the high-raised expectations of the most celebrated in their own day. Doubtless, when Christianity first appeared, those who considered that their names would be perpetuated, and demand the homage of future generations, were the consuls, the patriots, the favourites, the philosophers, the poets of Rome. The Suetonii and Agricolas who had earned glory, immortal as it was esteemed, by subduing the Parthian, or civilising the Briton. The Helvidii and Thraseas, who kept alive the spirit of the old Roman republic, which, if it could not enable them to live with dignity, taught them to die with intrepidity. The Tigellini and Sejani, whose celebrity, if less honourable, would live in the lasting execration of mankind, arraigned before the bar of posterity by the sententious sarcasm of the historian, or the sublime moral indignation of the satirist. The Senecas and Lucans, who had enriched with their wisdom, and ennobled with their

stately verse, the declining days of Roman literature. Among these, as they led the triumph to the Capitol, or toiled through crowding sycophants, were seen stealing about with cautious timidity, lest they should provoke the contemptuous spurn, some poor men of the most despicable race upon earth, dragged perhaps to prison, without exciting the commiseration, or even the notice of the multitude. Yet, of the former, how large a portion of the world is entirely ignorant; while the names of Peter and Paul are spoken with signs of the profoundest reverence in regions, rather I would say in worlds, unknown to Rome; hallow the most splendid edifices, and even cities; while their writings are multiplied into countless languages, and received as the authoritative moral laws of innumerable people. Little did Gallio think, when the destitute and friendless Paul stood before his throne, that the brother of Seneca, and the object of the panegyric of Statius, would be chiefly known to posterity, as connected with the history of that disregarded criminal, whose cause appeared beneath his cognisance.

On the Keeping of the Soul.

[SYDNEY SMITH.]

A QUESTION this which excites surprise at first, but which is justified by sad experience of human life, that men do too often set a price upon their souls, a price in avarice, a price in revenge, a price in ambition, a price in any one of those numerous objects of human desire which men foolishly consider to be of more value than their souls. But I will state to you a few of these unhappy contracts, and you will then see better what I mean.

A man sells his soul who gives up his honour and his integrity in pursuit of wealth; who becomes one atom more rich than good faith, than the law of the Gospel, and the dictates of conscience, tell him to be right. Give up his soul, in strict language, he cannot, for that is immortal and indestructible; but he gives up all that happiness which the soul may impart to him here, or secure to him hereafter in the kingdom of heaven. He gives up peace of mind; he gives up the consciousness of well-doing, which is the great orna-

ment and support of life; he gives up the approbation of just men; he gives up hope in Christ; he gives up inward support and outward cheerfulness; he gives up dignity and solid happiness; and so, he sells his soul!

. . . .

If you sell your opinions in the great public concerns of the world, and, for any temptation of power or interest, forget your duties to your fellow-creatures, then you sell your soul! You love something better than the approbation of conscience; you prefer some worldly consideration to the love of God: the best and the highest parts of human nature are exchanged for something which cannot rival them in excellence, cannot equal them in price—you have taken something in exchange for your soul!

There are many such contracts; there are few, very few, to whom the great glory of existence is the principal object of existence; who guard the intellectual soul, who guard the moral soul, who remember that to feel righteously and to act righteously is the highest privilege, as it is the greatest

happiness of man; who believe that all the accidental goods of life are dust, and dross, and dew, when they must be purchased by the degradation of our spiritual nature; few who, in balancing human actions, feel and exclaim with the text, "What shall I be profited if I gain the whole world and lose my own soul?" "What shall I give in exchange for my soul?"

. . . . . .

The intense misery of a man who finds he has gained his prize and lost his character, that he cannot be both reputable and bad, is a powerful homage paid to virtue. Happy the young man who has witnessed it; who has profited by witnessing it; who has learned from that sight, that it would profit him nothing if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul.

Then remember, in estimating this foolish bargain, that men often sell their souls for what cannot long, in the nature of things, continue to give them any satisfaction; for wealth and power, which after the first rapture of enjoyment they will not even know they possess; which confers

pleasure only for the short time they are enhanced by novelty. Nothing more common, than to see men wearied and disappointed by the price they have received, by the inadequate value given for the soul. All men love good principles, just thoughts, pure feelings, wise resolutions, steady perseverance, power over present impressions, the blessed fruit of the soul and of the spirit. A man may foolishly and rashly imagine he may gain something better by the exchange, but no man ever supposed that his being was not ennobled and dignified by these attributes—that they were not eminent parts of the Christian character, that they were not pleas for salvation, that they did not bring him nearer to God.

. . . . . .

Do not imagine that you can sell your soul partially, that you can bargain to go a certain length in evil doing, and no further—it is not impossible, but it is improbable. No human being ought to expose his eternal salvation to so dreadful a risk; if you begin, you answer the sneers of the world, and the contempt of the

world, by advancing still further, and you justify the contract you have made by ostentatious wickedness. Many men who begin with slight infringements of the law of conscience are provoked to go further, or become callous, and careless, and ignorant whether they are advancing or not. If you keep your soul, you must keep it wholly and entirely. I do not wish to lessen in your eyes the real difficulty. It must be kept with diligence, with uncompromising integrity; it must be kept with unyielding courage. It is no idle possession, it is no office of recumbency and ease, but you know that God sees it, and that Christ rewards it; that no labour has such a recompense, no toil such a reward, no race such a goal, no other exertions which Omniscience witnesses, no other service which Omnipotence repays.

On Anxiety in Worldly Matters.

[SYDNEY SMITH.]

No disposition has been more powerfully or more successfully satirised than the sanguine tempera-

ment of some men, which prevents them from ever learning a lesson of caution and prudence; men who are never daunted by disappointment, nor delayed by defeat; who trust implicitly in a fortune which has so often deceived them, and believe in the continuation of a success which has met with so many interruptions: but, bad as this is, it is infinitely better than the opposite extreme. The man who cannot be taught to despair, is better than the man who cannot be taught to hope, whom no success can ever inspire with confidence, no blessing ever teach to enjoy, who is dark in the blaze of noon, dead in the fulness and freshness of life, dwelt in by bad tormenting spirits, who dry up the sources of joy, and use all the activity of an immortal soul to make him more wretched than the beasts that perish.

To show so deep an anxiety about the affairs of this world, is hardly consistent with the feelings and opinions of those who consider it is a passage to a better. There are men whom this may become, in whom it is consistency; but not you, not the zealous disciples of Christ, not men

in whose hearts are deeply rooted the promises of the Gospel. If you say that you shall live again, and do not feel it, then I can understand that intensity of hope and fear which you exercise upon worldly objects; but if you are touched by the Word of God, if you are broad awake, if the scales have fallen from your eyes, if you see the redeeming Cross, and the Son of Man suffering upon it, what have you to do with all this miserable trepidation for the things of this world? How do you contrive to make them so large? what means do you take to render them so important? Not that I recommend enthusiasm or fanaticism, but I say, that an enthusiasm oblivious of this world is much more explicable, and much more consistent, in a candidate for immortal life, than that grovelling care for all the trifles of the world, that abject fear of all its evils, that immense and overweening attachment to all its goods, that real and practical disavowal of God's providence, which characterises the lives of many, ay, and of many very sincere Christians.

The pleasant sight is, to see a man who neither thinks the world of too much nor of too little consequence; who thinks it important enough for care, not for perturbation; for precaution, not for anxiety. The man who so hopes, that he is not presumptuous, so fears, that he is not pusillanimous, so believes in the superintending providence of God, that he relaxes no human efforts, and then only looks to God, when he has honestly and strenuously exerted all the faculties that God has given him.

The Secret of a Bad Life.

[VAUGHAN.]

THAT acquaintance with God which is the life and the glory of man, is not an intellectual, but (if we may so express it) a personal acquaintance.

Even as regards the former, our intellectual knowledge of God, it is a thing which comes to none of us without exertion of our own. We may have the Bible in our possession; we may have a superficial knowledge of its contents; we may

hear it read in our churches; we may occasionally read it by our bedside; and yet, all the while, our knowledge of its disclosures may be thoroughly dead and lifeless, even when regarded only in the light of common knowledge—the knowledge which we have of a science or of a language.

But far more is this the case when we interpret the word "knowledge" in its truer and higher sense, and follow the guidance of St Paul in that distinction which he draws for us when he says, "After that ye have known God, or rather are known of God"—and again, "If any man love God, the same is known of Him." That knowledge of God which consists in a personal acquaintance—that knowledge which comes by love—manifestly this is a thing not given once for all by revelation, not implied necessarily in the study of that revelation, but a thing as much requiring to be realised in each heart, to be acquired by each man through patient search and waiting, as though revelation had never been vouchsafed, or its light had never penetrated the place of our

abode. To this kind of knowledge of God it is as much as ever a prerequisite, that we seek the Lord. We must begin by "feeling after Him" (to use St Paul's figure) as a man seeks in the dark for an object which he can discern only by touch. How true, how striking, a description of our first efforts in the knowledge of God! We believe that He is; we believe that He alone can satisfy us, alone can give us rest; we are told that we must pray to Him, we are assured that He hears prayer; and thus, amidst ignorance, and perplexity, and much misgiving, we utter those words, or we meditate those thoughts of longing desire, in which He who searches the heart recognises the mind prompted by his Spirit, and assigns to them, in his unspeakable mercy, that meaning, that earnest and prevailing power, which, in themselves, and to us, they as yet had not.

By degrees, endeavour gives courage, and experience hope. Even when we scarcely dared to expect it, an answer came. While we were doubting whether any one heard, behold, we had

the petitions which we desired of Him. God waited not for a maturity of faith and of confidence; but, desiring that we should be saved, desiring (in other words) that we should acquaint ourselves with Him and be at peace, He met us on our way, He anticipated our words, He interpreted our scarcely articulate cry; and thus strengthened our feebleness and enlightened our darkness, and made us know that indeed he is not far from any one of us; that whosoever seeks shall find Him.

Thus it is—by a process of which we need not further detail the steps—that the faith of the understanding passes into a faith of the heart, and he who once (to use the language of the patriarch) had only heard of God by the hearing of the ear, is enabled to say, "But now mine eye seeth Thee." And when once that knowledge which comes by love is formed in the heart, it is of its very nature to live and grow there. It is only the want of that knowledge which keeps any man from intercourse with God. Where it exists, a man would exchange it for nothing else. There

is in that knowledge which is acquaintance with God—that knowledge which was described, in the case of one of his earliest servants, as a "speaking to him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend"—there is in that knowledge, in its very first elements, an attractive and a satisfying power such as forbids and precludes its abandonment. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And he who thus seeks the Lord, seeks Him that he may know Him, seeks Him that he may love Him, seeks Him that he may serve Him, seeks Him that he may be like Him, seeks Him that he may hereafter be with Him and see Him as He is, that man is doing the work of life: he is answering the object for which he was sent into the world: he is doing God's work, and therefore he can do man's also. That man will be diligent in all duty, that he may be about his Father's business. That man will renounce and resist all sin, because sin is God's enemy, and because he is able to say

with the Psalmist of all the enemies of God and of holiness, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? . . . Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." That man will bear patiently all life's trials, because he sees in them his Father's hand, and knows that they are the necessary discipline for a life in which there will be no will but one.

"To seek the Lord" is thus our one business: but we are reminded, further, that there is a condition, a requisite, for this search after God—without which it will fail. It is said of Rehoboam, "He prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." (2 Chron. xii. 14.) Or, as the margin gives it, "He fixed not his heart to seek the Lord." Just as it is said elsewhere of a king of Israel, "He took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart." It reminds us of the expressions of our Lord, as to the necessity of sitting down first and counting the cost, before we lay the first stone of the Christian building, before we set out on that enterprise which is to match us against a foe that is stronger than we.

A preparation of the heart is the condition of our search after God. To seek the Lord is a serious matter; in one sense, a difficult and laborious matter: it implies so deep a sense of the importance of its success, that we shall readily give up all else for it; and this, not once for all, by a sacrifice once made, and instantly recompensed with its eternal reward, but constantly, perseveringly, again and yet again, by a succession of daily efforts, daily struggles, daily self-denials, which are painful to the natural will, and beyond the strength of a merely human resolution. Therefore the heart must be prepared for this; the mind made up; the cost counted beforehand, and the eye fixed steadfastly on an object not of sight, but of faith.

And this it is which is so difficult—with man impossible. This is that which so many lack; we might almost say, which so few have. How far more common is it, to put off so serious a step as that of really seeking God: not indeed to avow to ourselves that we do so; not to refuse the call; not to say, "I will not;" but just to postpone the

decision, just to trifle with the command; to say (when the call reaches us to go and work to-day in God's vineyard), "I go, Lord," but yet not to go! This is the life of most men who call themselves Christians. They pacify their own consciences by a show of obedience; they are far from insensible to the beauty of the promise, or the justice of the demand; but they do not make it the business of life to attend to God's voice, to seek the Lord, to feel after Him, if haply they may find Him. They pay Him the homage of a creature, by thanking Him for his gifts, and asking his protection; but they have no real, no abiding, no heart-stirring desire for that which He offers them—his acquaintance, his friendship, his presence, his love. And therefore they do not prepare their hearts to seek the Lord.

We are taught, in the last place, the result of this. "He *did evil*, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." It must be so, when we consider what it is, in God's sight, "to do evil," and how alone we could ever be enabled to do what is in his sight good.

"To do evil" is a far wider term than may be at first apparent. Even in its narrowest sense—the commission of definite acts of sin—it is but too probable that he who is not heartily seeking God will be tempted, successfully tempted, to do evil. He casts away his only safeguard against the worst and vilest transgressions, when he forsakes, or neglects, or trifles with Him whose office it is to keep us from falling. The probability is, that, sooner or later, perhaps when he least of all expects it, the assault of temptation will come upon him, and, finding him off his guard, will at once or soon overthrow him. Sin may be more or less heinous, more or less open, more or less notorious to others; but it is not often that a whole life is spent even virtuously, when it is spent without God—without seeking God, without knowing God, without loving God. Well may he tremble for his very honour, for his very morality, for his very character, who is not preparing his heart to seek the Lord.

But, supposing all this to be in a particular case falsified; supposing such a man to pass

through life, year after year, without any marked or fatal fall, it is none the less certain that his whole life will have been a doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

We are all familiar with a passage in the Book of Psalms, where the parallel, the synonym, of "wickedness" is made to be the "forgetfulness of God." "The wicked shall be turned into hell: and all the people that forget God." Forgetfulness of God—the not cherishing the thought of Him at all times, as that which He is—the not referring everything to his will, the not taking delight in his worship, the not acquiescing cheerfully in his appointments, the not seeking earnestly his glory, the not ministering to Him in his creatures and his children—this is sin; apart from any open or even secret outbreaks of evil, apart from any words of profaneness, apart from any acts of oppression or immorality, nay, with everything that is respectable, and amiable, and praiseworthy in man's judgment, this state—the state of a created being who has broken loose from the bonds of his Creator's love, who is in-

different to his Creator's honour, who is indisposed for his Creator's presence—this is a state of sin, a life of evil; this man has the mark of God's enemy upon his forehead, and shall be pronounced *his* servant in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God.

It is an easy test to which to bring our present condition in the sight of God, to inquire, not so much, What have I done, what am I doing, that deserves God's displeasure? but rather, Is my present mind and feeling such that I should enjoy heaven, such as would qualify me for the occupations, for the pleasures, for the repose, of a place where God is all in all—a place of which the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the very light and the temple?

Thus judged, my brethren—and is it an unfair test?—thus judged, which of us shall see salvation?

Oh, how much have we to do, every one of us, before the years of our earthly life, few or many, be finally spent, and the thrones are set for judgment! This is the thought which ought to press

upon all of us. Granted that we are not chargeable with acts of gross transgression; granted that our lives are outwardly blameless; granted that no forms of palpable evil haunt us in these days of our youth and gladness;—*yet*, are we making preparation for heaven? are we seeking Him, preparing our hearts to seek Him, whom to know is eternal life, whom to love is heaven? If not now, when shall we begin this work? *When?* When the evil days come—days of weakness, and of remorse, and of bitterness? when the sound is already in our ears, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh?" when the door is already shut, and they who stand without cannot enter? God forbid that this should be the fate of any one of us—capable of such happiness, but capable, too, of such misery, as no imagination can conceive beforehand, and no power change when once felt!

CHAPTER III.

ON MANNER AND MOTIVES.

The Christian Character.

[ARCHBISHOP SUMNER.]

THE character which our Lord designs to create in his people, is described by Him in various ways; by his replies, on some occasions, to questions put to Him, by accidental remarks, arising from circumstances in which He was placed; by parables, illustrating the conduct which He meant to approve, or to condemn. But there is one occasion on which He concentrated, as it were, this character, and brought it forward in a single point of view; I mean that described in the text (Matt. v. 1, 2), when our Lord delivered the discourse which is known by the title of the Sermon on the Mount. And surely the situation there represented is the

most extraordinary and the most interesting which the history of the world records.

Imagine to yourselves the mediator of a new and everlasting covenant, which God had mercifully entered into with mankind; *multitudes* collected around Him, and listening to the message of Him who came down from heaven, to "speak that which He knew, and testify that which He had seen." Behold Him declaring, not according to man's judgment, but according to the judgment of his own infinite and infallible knowledge, to whom the title of *blessed* properly belongs—*i. e.*, for whom happiness is intended by their heavenly Father; what are the duties, the virtues, the graces, the qualifications, to which He has attached such a reward.

No wonder that a scene of such grandeur and importance should have left an impression which all the changes of time and foreign conquest have been unable to obliterate. The mountain from which this heavenly philosophy was first disclosed, has preserved by tradition the name of the Mountain of Beatitudes. Remember, that WE were ad-

dressed there, as well as the multitudes who then surrounded the holy Jesus; and may the Spirit of God enable us to receive the precious lessons which were there given for the instruction of Christians of every succeeding age!

If the scene was thus extraordinary, the instruction was no less so. The divine Teacher is easily distinguished. "He spake as never man spake." How new and wonderful the opening of his discourse must have sounded in the ears of the multitude assembled! Some of them perhaps were come, in hopes of bearing high office in that kingdom of this world which they expected the Messiah to establish, and were prepared to ask what the mother of two of the disciples asked afterwards, "Lord, grant that my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, when thou comest in thy kingdom." Others would expect to hear a lecture on their law, the law of Moses; or a panegyric on their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on whose merits they rested a claim to the exclusive favour of God towards their own nation; or, perhaps, a philosophical discourse on

the nature of the soul, deciding the dispute which existed between the Pharisees and Sadducees concerning the resurrection of the dead.

Nothing of all this. No strife about words to no profit. No "foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law." No encouragement to those who suppose that gain is godliness. He who had been "in the beginning with God, and was God," ascends at once to heaven. "In his first sentence, he casts as it were this world behind Him, or carries his hearers out of it, and above it." "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." And why? Not because the world esteems them, nor because they possess the honours or the treasures of the world; but because "they shall obtain mercy; they shall see God; they shall be called the children of God; theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

As much as to say, Blessed are these characters; to them the promises of the Gospel are annexed; they "have treasure in heaven:" such must those be who take my yoke upon them, and learn of me; my Spirit shall make them such; for "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

This leads me to advert to an error which prevails sometimes in doctrine, but far more frequently in the practical application of undisputed truth; when the efficacy of our Lord's death is so represented, as if the principal object of his incarnation was to save from future punishment those who have led a careless or a sinful life; to suffer in their stead the penalties which their disobedience towards God had deserved and incurred.

Now, that the redemption of sinners was his great object, none can deny. "This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15.) "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. v. 19); that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many should be made righteous;" that "as by

the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift might come upon all men unto justification of life" (Rom. v. 18, 19); that "as in Adam all died, even so in Christ might all be made alive." (1 Cor. xv. 22.)

But no one can study the Gospel faithfully, without perceiving that its purpose is "to save sinners," by converting them: converting them "to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from thenceforth according to his holy Word." (Communion Service.) Not that men should pursue their own will and evil propensities, following the devices and desires of their own hearts; and that at last, when this world failed them, and they could extract no more enjoyments from it, Christ should confer a pardon on them, and admit them into heaven: but that they should live here as his servants, according to the laws which He has prescribed, in order that they might be thus prepared to receive the future "reward of the inheritance."

Thus we are told, that those who are "the

called according to the purpose of God, whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be *conformed to the image of his Son.*" (Rom. viii. 29.) We are told again, that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (1 Cor. vi. 9, Heb. xii. 14.) The injunctions which the Apostles intermixed with their announcement of the gospel, even if they were not everywhere obvious, might be collected from a single passage of St Paul:— "We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus." (1 Thess. iv. 1.)

But, without multiplying quotations to the same effect, consider the nature of those characters on which the positive blessings are pronounced in the verses which succeed the text. They are the "poor in spirit; the meek; the peacemakers; the merciful; the pure in heart; the persecuted for righteousness' sake." All these are characters

which are to be displayed in actual life; which suppose temptation and difficulty; which are not to yield to the opposition which they meet with in the world, but to be confirmed by it. A man could not show a humble spirit, unless he were surrounded by objects which excite him to be proud, or by persons who provoke him to jealousy and emulation. It is while he is thus surrounded that he is enjoined to cultivate meekness. Purity of heart is exhibited in resisting "the lusts of the flesh," and "mortifying the deeds of the body." (Romans viii. 13.) We are exhorted to "hunger and thirst after righteousness," not when there can be no other object of our desire, but while the heart is actually disposed and tempted to seek in preference the honours, or riches, or pleasures of the world. Patience under trials, and willingness to endure reproach for righteousness' sake, is to be practised in the bustle and business of life, when there are men ready to "revile and speak evil falsely" against those who differ from them.

These, then, are characters which cannot be assumed in a moment, at the close of our earthly

scene, merely because they are wanted, and necessary that we may be received into heaven. They cannot be adopted like a name or title, or put on as a dress, merely because they are useful for the occasion. Nor can the opposite vices be suddenly thrown aside, because they have been found pernicious, or can be practised no longer, or we dread their consequences. We cannot have a perfect flower, except by gradual and careful cultivation; we cannot have a perfect ear of corn, except by sowing the seed, and watching and encouraging it as it advances; and so the Christian character is gradually formed, and "grows in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ," till it reaches its maturity, and is fitted for the garner of the heavenly Husbandman.

Honour All Men.

[HUSSEY.]

THE inclination to despise others is plainly the besetting sin of cultivated and active minds; it is indeed the immediate effect of all unsanctified

knowledge, for "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. viii. 1), as we have seen in the example of the heathens; it may be well therefore for us to be on our guard against it. We are much occupied here in the pursuit of knowledge, and we are favoured with many advantages: let us beware that we be not tempted to forget the Apostle's command to "honour all men," either collectively, by looking down on those who have not equal advantages with us, or (which will be the necessary consequence of the other habit) individually, by affecting a superiority over each other.

It is evident that we must absolutely disclaim and avoid some habits of thinking and acting which have at times gained much praise among men. That "independence" which was once the boast of philosophy is quite contrary to the spirit of Christianity. *We* cannot retire within ourselves, and live in a world of our own; if our own needs compel us not to seek the aid of others, yet our duty calls us out of ourselves to seek their welfare. All pretence of independence is inconsistent with Christian love: we are all "members

one of another" (Rom. xii. 5): we are expressly commanded to "seek every one another's weal" (1 Cor. x. 24): the world may call this officious, and philosophy thinks it weakness, to be disturbed by the concerns of others; but it was the course which He followed, who came not to please Himself, nor to do his own will.

The same may be said of that lofty indifference to the opinions of others, which has sometimes passed for the best proof of strength of mind and the fruit of true wisdom. That *greatness of mind* which consists in thinking meanly of all men in comparison with ourselves, is but disguised littleness, without the humility. Whatever shape this temper has taken at different times, in every one it is strange and hostile to the Christian spirit. Whether it be the "magnanimity" which springs from a great opinion of our own worth; or the cold-hearted poverty of spirit which decries everything, and holds that "*nil admirari*" is the sovereign recipe for happiness; or the cruel selfishness which can behold the turmoil and struggles of mankind, like the waves from a rock, unmoved,

except with pleasure at his own security; or that prouder pretence which knowledge was supposed to give: all such notions, which recognise a right in one class to stand apart and disregard others, are adverse to the words of the Apostle, " Honour all men."

Let none such, therefore, pass current among us. They are not wanted: we can stand high enough and maintain our vantage-ground, without raising such sandy foundations. The Gospel teaches us to live above the world, but not out of the world: it exalts us much higher than human pride can go, by giving us true wisdom, the "wisdom in them that are perfect" (1 Cor. ii. 6), but yet it lowers us to the level of other men in our thoughts and feelings, when it bids us "mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." (Rom. xii. 16.) It is not due to superior refinement, or talents, or attainments, or judgment, that they should be less considerate of those who are inferior in these things, but the contrary: and it is remarkable that the Apostle speaks of "giving honour to the weaker vessel" (1 Peter iii. 7),

as if it were more incumbent on *the superior* to give than to receive honour in the Christian code.

Let us beware, then, of using the weapons of the world. We must sometimes meet with ignorance and error; but however we may be annoyed by their opposition, we may not cover ourselves with the shield of pride, and take refuge in contempt. Sarcasm and censure, and reproaches and ridicule, or declaiming against the folly and injustice of men in general, or of certain parties among men, are not our weapons. I do not speak now of the bad policy of such defences, although there is little doubt that they who raise their voice very loudly in decrying whole classes will hear the echo of it returning some day not unjustly upon themselves, but I say it is unchristian. Let it be granted, for the sake of argument, that we are right in our principles, and our opponents quite wrong, still we are bound to *honour* them, so far as they are men. And this is the peculiar beauty and excellence of the Christian rule, that we must maintain our principles at their full height, in spite

of the opposition of all men, not compromising, nor abating, nor lowering them to suit the opinions of the world in the least point, so far as relates to our own practice, and yet we must be as gentle and as tender in our feelings towards others as if we depended altogether on their opinions. We must honour them even although we think them wrong; and while we oppose them as a duty, we must do it as if we esteemed them with respect. Let us not fall into the mistake which is sometimes made, that the truth or the importance of the principle for which we contend, or the strength and sincerity of our devotion to it, or even, as we think, the guilt which is incurred by the denial of it, can justify the expression or the feeling of contempt towards any adversaries. And observe here that the thoughts are to be controlled: there ought to be a real restraint laid upon the movements of the mind. For it is possible to obey the precept in show but not in spirit. The usages of society have thrown a mantle of decent reserve over the feelings for mutual convenience; for vehemence of expression has sometimes unpleasant consequences; and

men are generally aware that it is imprudĕnt to give too great liberty to their passions in controversy. But under the cold surface of a calm demeanour it is possible that the heart may burn with the most unchristian feelings, which may be indulged with the less scruple, on account of the slight external semblance of restraint. There is such a thing as a contemptuous coolness, a bitter and sarcastic calmness, which seems no better than the honest effusion of the genuine pride and hatred of the natural heart. There is also a philosophic apathy, which wears a calm exterior because it is indifferent, and despises not persons only, but also the things for which they contend; which is not the Christian temper. The Christian temper is rather that which cannot remain unconcerned in anything which deeply interests his fellow-men; but when the feelings are strongly engaged in the issue of a question, can regulate them aright, and contend earnestly, but without violence. For the Christian law requires that the bad feelings should be stifled and put down, not concealed only, by the infusion of

better thoughts towards others. We should repress self-love and pride, and think of the precept that each is to esteem others as really *better* than himself. At the worst we must refrain from indulging our own passions even in the best cause, but commit the judgment to God only. It was an angel disputing with Satan who "durst not bring a railing accusation against him, but said, the Lord rebuke thee." (Jude 9.)

And if such is the deportment prescribed for us towards all the world, how much more are we bound to follow the same rules towards those who are most like us, and most nearly our equals; if differences or controversies should arise within the Church between those who have many principles and sentiments in common, how can it not be especially due that *they* should use gentleness and show honour towards each other? For they can be at no loss for grounds of mutual respect, where both are alike heirs of the common salvation, both "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. xii. 11), as the very eagerness of their opposition shows, both "zealous of good works," both also,

perhaps, bound together by those many human, yet natural and lawful ties, of identity of tastes, feelings, and associations. Would that in all our differences we might, at least, agree in that in which agreement is easy, in obeying the Apostle's rule, which is but one and the same for all of us, "Honour all men."

Let us be persuaded that, however certain the truth for which we contend may be, to dishonour and despise others in our thoughts is not practical truth, but falsehood. Love of the truth never made men contemptuous of others, any more than love of justice can make men cruel: zeal for God never made men full of pride, hatred, and bitterness of heart: the love of Christ never made men esteem themselves better than others: the real cause of such feelings is always *self;* the cause of truth is abandoned exactly so far as sentiments of personal contempt are admitted into the mind. Whether the passions are enlisted on the side of truth or not in the controversy, at least so far as the contest is carried on by the passions, it is not the contest of truth, but the contest of self; and

the disputants in it are moved not by the love of God, but by self-love and self-will.

The Honour Due to All Men.

[BISHOP WILBERFORCE.]

As honouring ourselves is the first rule that I would give, so the second is: seek to practise yourselves in honouring others. God has so formed us, that our spiritual and moral cure is to be wrought by the blessing of his grace upon our practical efforts. We must gain tender, sympathetic hearts, hearts which, indeed, honour our brethren, not by cultivating abstract sensibilities, but by practising kindly actions. It is not in the cell of the meditative monk, but in him who mingles always the night watchings and prayers of the Mount of Olives with daily ministrations to a suffering multitude, that the earnest reality of sympathy is most surely to be found. If, then, you would have large hearts, if you would truly honour all men, begin by practising the lower measures of this grace in your conduct towards those around

you. Strive to remember who and what they are, with whom you mix in the commonest details of household offices. Be they wife, or children, or friends, or dependants, or superiors, look at them as souls, redeemed souls, true men—as persons, not as things; as those whose aid you may never use lawfully as if they were things, but always with an eye to their good as much as to your own; as those in whom a spiritual cure is begun, or in whom a spiritual pestilence is raging. Watch yourselves in your conduct with them, lest sensuality, or sloth, or indolence, or vanity, or any other evil thing, poison your intercourse, lead you to treat them unworthily of their high calling, and of the spiritual influences which in the Church of Christ are around you and them; of the high destiny for misery or joy which is eternally before you.

Great opportunities, brethren, are in your hands in these common things. The kindly actions of family life may be sanctified, until they become the props by which your spiritual affections are trained heavenward. Learn by a Christian use

of them this blessed lesson. You may grow by God's help able to see, through the coarse common features of ordinary life, the great spiritual realities which lie beneath them, to be, indeed, "kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another."

Another great branch of this self-healing practice, is that of which an opportunity is set before you here. If you would "honour all men," you must learn to sympathise especially with the weak, the suffering, and the sinful; and this power you must gain by practice; by labouring for them, by taking willingly upon yourselves a portion of their burden; by denying yourselves, that you may help them; that you may tread, indeed, in his footsteps, "who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich." You must follow Him who "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sickness." This is especially needful for maintaining the health of your own souls in a state of society like ours. Who has not felt amongst the crowds of our great towns the pa-

ralysing effect of meeting daily with multitudes with whom he has no bond of common sympathy? It is hard to break through the cold separation which such intercourse creates—to feel that we and they are brethren, sharers in the same life, and, as we trust, heirs of the same inheritance; yet, unless we do break through it, we must grow unmanly and ungodly. We should therefore use eagerly every means for keeping alive within ourselves these powers of spiritual perception. And amongst these none is, under God's blessing, more effectual than the active ministries of a loving spirit in behalf of others. Happy are they who can thus keep ever new within their hearts the springs of sympathy and pity, by a personal attendance on the needs of others.

Christian Self-Denial.

[JELF.]

CHRISTIAN self-denial is perfectly consistent with the innocent and rational enjoyments, and still more with the natural attachments, of human so-

ciety. We are required to practise no unnecessary sacrifices, no superstitious austerities, no denial of those charities which bind man to man, and which the Author of our being has commanded us to observe. It is only where duty is on one side, and self is on the other, that the sacrifice is called for. It is only when the foot or the eye *offend* us, that we are to pluck them out, and cast them from us. The charities of our nature, and even the instincts of our nature, under proper control, may be innocently indulged, when they do not interfere with our duty to Christ and his Gospel. It is only when we "love father or mother more than Christ" (Matt. x. 37), for in all that concerns the Gospel there is no loss, no sacrifice, no wounded affection, no persecution, no death, which ought not to be accounted gain in Christ Jesus.

That this duty, even thus restricted, is easy to man in his present infirmity, no one will pretend to affirm; but our business is to place before you, not that which is *easy*, but that which is *true;* and whether we are taught it or not, whether we

believe it or disbelieve it, it is still true, that the best preparation for the crown of glory is the crown of thorns. Had Christ never suffered, the way to everlasting life were not only difficult, but impossible. But He has not only opened to us the gates, but He has sent us a guide and comforter, even the Holy Spirit, who assists us in every endeavour to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross; and, if we faint not, we shall find, by this spiritual assistance, every advance less painful, and our trials, even before they have passed away, shall lose more and more of their bitterness. The chief difficulty is to begin; the second self-denial will cost us less than the first; and the whole habit, when acquired, will be less distasteful than the single action; till at length, even in this world, we perceive that, rugged as are the first approaches to righteousness, "her ways *are* ways of pleasantness, and all her paths *are* peace." The time will come, when we shall look back upon the interests and pleasures of this lower world with disgust or indifference, and dwell with pleasure only on those victories which

the grace of God and the merits of Christ have enabled us to gain over ourselves, and when we shall feel the true value of that habit which, by rooting out selfishness, has prepared us for the communion of saints and angels, and when finally we shall confess, that, compared with the exceeding weight of glory which shall have been wrought thereby, "the yoke of Christ *is* easy, and his burden *is* light."

Patience under Reproof.

[ARCHBISHOP SUMNER.]

THIS is by no means a common quality. Many persons who will join in lamenting their own weakness, and the corruption of their hearts, cannot bear that any particular fault should be pointed out to them, and thus put themselves out of the reach of that medicine which is intended to heal the diseases of the soul; for few friends are so faithful as to discharge honestly the duty of rebuke and correction, at the risk of losing goodwill or of exciting anger. Yet no duty can be

more plain and scriptural, than that of rebuking those who transgress, except, perhaps, that of receiving such correction patiently and thankfully. If we see a man's health declining, or if we see the worldly estate of a friend in jeopardy, we warn and advise them, and they are grateful for such timely admonition; and shall we be then only silent when the soul is at stake? or shall we be offended by no other warning, than by that which admonishes us to beware of the snares of Satan, and the wrath of God?

But the man of true meekness will listen to such an adviser as his best friend, and will not stifle the suggestions of conscience, when it tells him that the rebuke is just, and his fault requires amendment.

The Lesson of Comparison.

[HUSSEY.]

If we look back into history, and compare ourselves with good men of other times in the Church of God, God knows that we can find examples enough to reprove us for our manifold sins, for

our selfishness, our indolence, our lukewarmness, our pride, our love of this world. It is nothing to say that we can find many who are worse than we are: we are at no loss to find some who were better: and these put us to shame. These are proofs that we are not yet what we ought to be, what we might be, what others have been; and therefore we ought to humble ourselves in earnest endeavours after improvement. Which of us can say that he does as much for God, and for the benefit of his brethren, as he might do? Who among us does not feel that he falls short in many points of what might justly be required of him? Who can compare himself with men of former ages, and not discover many who have gone far beyond him in every one of the points in which he endeavours to do anything that is good, and that perhaps out of fewer advantages than he possesses?

It is in this way that we may profitably study the characters of antiquity, observing their virtues, and correcting our own failings by them. Not ungratefully disowning the blessings which

God has bestowed upon us, in that state of things in which He has preserved us; nor disdaining the fellowship of our brethren around us, while we aspire to some higher notion of ideal perfection in past ages, with which we would individually associate ourselves in thought. But while we acknowledge that it is "by the grace of God" that we "are what we are" (1 Cor. xv. 10), let us not shrink from confessing our own deficiencies; but let us seek out the examples of the good of all ages, and learn by them to improve ourselves.

Restlessness.

[BISHOP WILBERFORCE.]

RESTLESSNESS has a twofold root of bitterness, which trust in God must extirpate. It springs from dissatisfaction with the present, or from anxiety about the future. There is a deep melancholy in the heart of every man, bound up in the very bundle of his life, which, like the breath of myrrh, is ever ready to spread itself by a secret influence over all his being; and in spirits of

the deepest tone there is the most of this, for this is the greatness of the soul reaching after its true portion; and this may at any time make all the life of any man restless and sad, unless he learns to lean his soul upon God—to believe that He is near us, that He is Truth, is Love, and is ours through Christ Jesus. And as we dwell always on the brink of these dark and mighty waters, so any great grief may at any time break up their bitter fountains, till they overwhelm us, unless we are built upon this same rock, of confidence in God. Hence we see many men always dissatisfied, always restless, always craving, always miserable. And in mere life there is enough to breed this temper in all men. But this is the believer's talisman, this is the Christian man's safeguard—"Hold thee still in the Lord." Stay this restlessness by the power of his name.

In common life this must be our rest, and in great sorrow, too. Then also must we be still in Him; not, indeed, by striving unnaturally not to feel sorrow, but by our taking the sorrow from Him. We are not to let its flood, at the highest

of its swelling, sweep us from this sure anchorage. We are to submit ourselves, not to the sorrow, but to Him; to seek not for the frozen numbness of the stoic—for this is most unlike the temper of the Christian man, who is kept tender in heart and lively in affection by his faith itself, and who therefore will, in one way, suffer more acutely than he can whose heart has been made callous by selfishness—but for the faithful submission of the child to the trusted discipline of a loving Wisdom, which cannot wound us but for our truer healing.

Here is the cure for that restlessness which springs from dissatisfaction with the present; and here also is the cure for that which arises from anxiety about the future. For, in this case also, the Christian's trust is not in the future, but in God. It is not that he has persuaded himself that all will always go with him just as he chooses; that he shall succeed in all things; that life will be to him all sunshine; that all things will come to him as he would have them, and stay with him as he would keep them: this is trusting in the

future, not in God; this is being sanguine, not being trustful; this leads to men's being full of schemes, and wishes, and earthly hopes, and ambitious desires, and then of restless fears and sour disappointments, not to their being still. The root of all stillness is trust in God: it consists in looking on, as little as may be into, that future; in looking always to God; and in quieting, with the blessed thought of Him, the anxious spirit within us, which otherwise must tremble at the edge of that misty to-come, wherein are floating obscurely, for the eye of every man who peers into it, forms of loss and sorrow insupportable.

Be Courteous.

[WARTER.]

READ but the Scriptures with that sober attention which is their due, pray earnestly to understand them aright, see that by the help of God's good Spirit they be grafted inwardly in your hearts, and you will soon perceive that the stature of Christian manhood is incomplete without

courtesy. Weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, it will be found wanting. Measured by the royal cubit, it will fall short of the "perfection of beauty," which is "holiness to the Lord."

Consider but awhile with Scripture at your right hand, and you will see the reason. Pitifulness, that is, and courtesy, are ever combined; and these, when without hypocrisy (for it is an old saying that the devil lurks hid behind the cross, and people of double pretensions want double watching), are not disunited from humility and charity. Only turn to that most exquisite chapter, the thirteenth chapter of St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," and you may at once be aware how real charity is exemplified in real courtesy. Weigh its characteristics. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity,

but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (1 Cor. xiii. 1. 4–7.) Such is the inimitable description of charity, or Christian love. And the man that is possessed with it hath a fountain in his heart which is ever bubbling up unto eternal life, for all the "fresh springs" there have their rise in God. "God is in him of a truth." But, as "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and as "Moses' face shone" when he came down from the Mount, so, when charity dwelleth in the inward parts, and is, so to say, an essential portion of a man's substance, then the words of his mouth will "be courteous," and his outward demeanour will shine forth gloriously in affability and in grace. Courtesy, indeed, such as the Apostle describes, when he describes charity, is an inwrought grace. All that see it in its full and perfect beauty will confess, "This hath God wrought." It is not in man himself. It is the result of the "engrafted word."

"The roots of plants," says an excellent commentator on the epistle from which the text is

taken, are "hidden under ground, so that themselves are not seen, but they appear in their branches, and flowers, and fruits, which argue there *is* a root and life in them; thus the graces of the Spirit, planted in the soul, though themselves invisible, yet discover their being and life in the track of a Christian man's life, his words, and actions, and the frame of his carriage."

And herein is answered the objection and cavil of disputers of this world. They often say that courtesy is put on as a mask, to cajole and to deceive, and none say this *more often* (as will not fail acute observers and readers of character) than those who have some unmannerly bitterness at heart themselves, who will scarce drink of the same cup that sinners drink of at the Lord's table without turning it, who when dress and pretensions will not attract notice, endeavour to obtain an unenviable celebrity by pulling to pieces the character of their betters. Such people, Christian brethren, are not uncommon, and such, be assured, are not courteous. Whatever their station may be, they are strangers to that virtue

unto which the Apostle exhorts us. For courtesy, mind, is confined to no rank; in *manners*, though not in riches, the peasant may rival the prince. But, under such circumstances, there will be undoubtedly a fault, for advantages of education ought, so to say, to turn the wolf into the lamb. It should soften men's manners, and not permit them to be brutal. To be brought "up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" is, after all, the real basis of courtesy.

But to answer the objection alluded to. Courtesy is nothing put on. If it *be* merely outward, it is not according to God. It is but what the prophet calls "untempered mortar" (Ezek. xiii. 11), a mere daub, and of no avail to edification. It will never build up the Christian man. Mere outward courtesy, indeed, is but a specious and showy sort of hypocrisy. They that are possessed of it oftentimes "speak friendly to their neighbours, but imagine mischief in their hearts." (Ps. xxviii. 3). Misnamed courtesy of this sort sounds hollow to the touch. There is a flaw in it. It is no better than a broken vessel, "wherein is

no pleasure," nor use. The "spirit of the sound mind" (Hos. viii. 8.) is not bound up with such courtesy as this.

Still, it will be said, the fact is so, and a general crust of hypocrisy, rather than of courtesy, seems to cover the whole face of society, destructive as moss and lichen to the tender branch, or, as of old, the "fretting leprosy" to the house. Neither is it to be denied. But it is *only* said. This is not courtesy. The infection of our nature remaineth, and we cannot help it. But, by God's grace, we can strive against it. We can see that it does not grow from bad to worse. We can roll off the reproach which is cast against the true-hearted, and which denies to *them* the "*simplicity* that is in Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 3), whose boast all the day long, and "whose rejoicing is this, the testimony of their conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12.)

And this reproach, Christian brethren, it is our bounden duty to roll off. God has given his

chosen ones the spirit of a sound mind, and they are to hold to it. Whatever the world may say, however it may cozen and deceive, *they* are to be pitiful—*they* are to be courteous. To them it appertains, as consigned to the inheritance of the saints in light, and that peace which passeth all understanding, in some sort is waited upon by courtesy as a handmaid.

And now, having said sufficient to show how necessary courtesy is to our well-being here, as well as to consummate our well-being hereafter, let us first see what militates against it, and how it comes to pass that one so rudely jostles another in running the race which is set before them, instead of helping each other by the ready hand, the willing mind, the cheerful look, and the encouragement of the single eye.

The sin, Christian brethren, which doth more readily beset us all here is pride, not made for man, and that which caused the angels' fall. It is this which leads us all astray, and suffers us not to reap the blessings of the humble mind. The proud man (and what heart is not more or

less proud?) stands alone. It makes him a watch-tower for himself, and beholds other puny mortals creeping beneath his feet. He is as a god unto himself. And how, with such ideas, can he "condescend to men of low estate," after the courteous and salvifical example of Him who bowed the very heavens, and came down to live and die for sinful dust and ashes? Alas! the humility of the Saviour has no part in the heart of the proud man.

Uncharitable Judgments.

[BERENS.]

A READINESS to pronounce a harsh and severe judgment upon those who have suffered some heavy calamity, is generally the offspring of *vanity* and *self-conceit*. When we hear of any of our fellow-creatures who have been suddenly cut off, or grievously injured in person or in property, by some sad accident, while we ourselves are safe and free from harm, we, perhaps, are willing to flatter ourselves that we are safe, because we are better than they were, and that they

have suffered because they most deserved to suffer, because they were the greater sinners.

This appears to have been precisely the turn of mind, or feeling, which our Saviour wished to check: "Suppose ye that these men were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem, I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

When any great calamity happens to others, it ought to make us look closely to ourselves; it ought to induce us to consider seriously how we should have been prepared to meet it; in what state it would have found us; in what condition, if it had terminated our time of trial, it would have placed us *for ever* in the world to come. Such awful and affecting events ought to lead us to "search and try our ways, and to turn again to the Lord" (Lam. iii. 40), in every instance in which we had in any degree departed

from Him. In one word, they should bring us to repentance: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Perhaps, when we come seriously and honestly to examine ourselves, to look back impartially upon our past conduct, and the usual temper and disposition of our souls, we shall find so much of sin and transgression as will give us cause to apprehend—even supposing those who have suffered to have been great sinners—yet that we have been even greater sinners than they were. It is recorded of one of the ablest and best of men of the age in which he lived, that when he heard of a criminal condemned to die, he used to think, and often to say, "Who can tell whether this man is not better than I? Or, if I am better, it is not to be ascribed to myself, but to the goodness of God." It is the advice of an apostle, that "in lowliness of mind each should esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. ii. 3); and if we seriously reflect upon the many sinful passions and desires which lurk in our bosoms, the many evil thoughts which sometimes arise in our minds, our many

omissions of duty, our many unguarded expressions, there probably is not one of us, but will find reason humbly to acknowledge that he knows more harm of himself, than he knows of any one else. The criminals who are condemned to death by the laws of their country, or those who, from time to time, are recorded as perishing by some awful and sudden calamity, may, or may not, die in their iniquity; but, if they had had the religious advantages with which we have been blessed, if they had met with the various checks and warnings, either external or from their own consciences, which we have met with, they would, perhaps, have repented long ago, and have now ranked much above us in every moral and religious attainment.

Christian Contentment.

[TAIT.]

How much are all, the best of us, stimulated in our exertions by the prospect of rewards, of honour amongst our contemporaries, and the solid advan- on which honour is attendant. These feel-

ings, in the way of a temptation to evil, it is true, grow much more powerful when we have entered upon manhood. In the generous rivalry for school distinctions, they are comparatively almost innocuous; among the young they seldom cause any envious detraction of our rivals, or sour the mind with unchristian discontent; while they are of vast use, as secondary motives, for stirring us to exertion when our spirits flag, and when we feel it very difficult to be sustained by the abstract sense of our Christian duty. But still the question is a very serious one, for young as well as old. In accustoming the young to ambitious feelings within their narrow sphere, are we not teaching them to play with edged tools, which in the end may pierce them to the heart? If ambition is dangerous in the great world, can it be used with safety as a stimulant here?

But first let us see if ambitious desires really are an evil in mature life. And here note, that by ambition I do not mean merely that overweening desire of aggrandisement which has urged a few of the chief men in history laboriously to wrestle

against every obstacle, till they had gained the dizzy height from which they could be seen and admired of all men. I would rather now extend the meaning of the word to all those feelings which make men press eagerly to a higher station than that which God has assigned to them. It is not easy to settle, at once, whether such feelings are necessarily unchristian.

Remark, however, a few particulars which may make us, at the very first, look upon them with suspicion.

First: Ambitious longings, such as we now speak of, are great disturbers of our peace of mind; unless very narrowly watched and checked, they are sure to make us discontented with the immediate lot which God has given us. The poet, speaking of the clergy, has prayed that our country may be blessed with men by ambitious longings undisturbed; and truly in many a quiet country parsonage, and in the still chamber of many a laborious student, the poisoning influence of this worldly ambition is working quite as much as in the tainted atmosphere of courts and legis-

lative assemblies. If a man, whatever be his station, allows his mind to be continually dwelling on the thought that probably he will soon rise a little higher; or still worse if, as the natural consequence of such thoughts, he becomes sick by hope deferred—soured because many as little gifted as himself are sailing prosperously with the breeze, while he seems hopelessly stranded, farewell at once to all honest, simple-hearted endeavours to labour on in faith in his own appointed calling, though no eye but God's may note his toil, and no voice of human praise may ever cheer him. God seems to have set this mark of his disapproval on ambitious longings, that though He may allow a few to indulge them, and have their hopes gratified, for most men, he has made them mere disturbers of our peace, and a hindrance to our usefulness.

Secondly: Though it be true that all great and ardent minds have had the seeds of something like ambition in them by nature, the more they have been matured and purified by the Spirit of God, and become conformed to the image of their Sa-

viour, the more have they learned so rightly to control such feelings that, at last, by God's grace, they have been freed from all in them which is worldly. Many of you will remember whence these words come—"I thank God, as far as ambition is concerned, it is, I trust, fully mortified. I have (now) no desire but to step back from my present place in the world, and not to rise higher. Still there are works which, with God's permission, I would do before the night cometh. Above all, let me mind my own present work; to keep myself pure, and zealous, and believing; labouring to do God's will, yet not anxious that it should be done by me rather than by others, if God disapprove of my doing it." Thus wrote one whose spirit had long been growing in depth of Christian feeling, and recorded his protest against the danger of such desires in the full vigour of life and strength, when destined (though he knew it not) after a few hours to be summoned to the presence of his Saviour. And thus, doubtless, would he have wished to think and to record his feelings, had he known that this protest was to be, as it

proved, the last sentence he should ever write. For,

Thirdly: There is no doubt that, however men may think in life, the world's honours have no attractions for them, when they are brought face to face with death. When a man is laid upon his death-bed, if Christian feelings, by the grace of God, then gain their due possession of him, and his eyes be not awfully blinded by the mists of worldliness even while the world is vanishing, his whole stay and comfort will certainly be then in thinking, not of the estimation in which men held him, but of the ground he has for believing himself to be loved by God and by his Saviour.

These three things, then, may well make us suspect that such longings are inconsistent with earnest Christian faith, since God has made them for the most part impediments to our peace and happiness in life, and the certain source of deep regret to all who are thoughtful on their death-beds; and since also the more a man, by God's grace, becomes an earnest Christian, the more he is freed from their dominion.

Moreover, there is another remarkable point to be noted in God's dealings with the ambitious. How seldom, even when He is pleased to indulge their longings by success, does He allow them to feel any real happiness in the attainment of the objects they have panted for. How common a remark is it, that, when a man is very successful in the world, God does not allow his domestic to keep pace with his outward prosperity. How often, when a man has attained in age those objects which he strained after from his youth, has he lost the friends with whom he had hoped to share them, and all the freshness of those early feelings which he had expected would give as great zest to enjoyment as to anticipation. Truly, then, even the worldly will allow that God has made the prizes of worldly ambition very hollow.

But we are not thus left merely to conjecture what is God's will as to these feelings in Christians. When we turn to the perfect model of the Christian man, in the Lord Jesus Christ himself, it will be very difficult for the most ingenious to show what part of all his conduct, or what words

He ever uttered, give any encouragement to longings after worldly distinction. Doubtless He felt always, as his servant Paul felt, when his heart had been renewed and purified, his meat and drink it was to be about his Father's business: his highest earthly happiness to perform the part his Father had assigned to Him.

Have we, then, arrived at this conclusion, that all desire of pre-eminence in manhood is essentially unchristian? and if so, how are we justified in encouraging it amongst the young? If so, how do we account also for the fact that God has made the desire to excel so strong an incentive in our nature? If we had nothing to do with this desire but to root it out by the help of the Spirit of Christ, an antagonist may fairly urge that our Creator would never have planted it so deeply in our nature. It is not his way to give man feelings which are in themselves all and entirely evil. Even those most usually perverted, and most deadly in their perversion, might have been employed on a worthy object, for the promotion of his glory.

Ambition, then, is a perverted form of that desire to excel in God's sight, and to win the approval of Christ our judge, which St Paul, at the very time when he was content to forego all worldly good—even life itself—for Christ, felt with all the keenness of his ardent spirit. "I press," says he, in the third chapter of this very epistle (Phil. iii. 14), "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Here is the ambition of a Christian; and we deceive our brethren to their ruin, if ever, either in our training of the young, or our exhortations to the old, we lead them to suppose that they may safely substitute the desire of man's praise for that of pleasing God and Christ. If they seek prizes and distinctions, here or elsewhere, if they desire to rise in school or in the world, they must pray earnestly that the great object of all their striving may be to please the Lord Jesus Christ. It is written of Him that, as He grew in stature, He grew in favour with men as well as God; but assuredly He never sought man's favour as an object in which his soul rested.

To seek to excel, then, we may conclude, has nothing unchristian in it, if you seek it as in Christ's sight: if you never forget that it is his favour and not man's after which, with all our strivings, we should aim; if, even in the praiseworthy desire to please your friends at home by your success, you still look higher even than to them—to your eternal Friend in heaven. Such desire of excellence as this can never foster discontent; it will not make us repine, if our efforts are unsuccessful. If we have done what we could, we shall know that the Lord, whom we serve, approves our efforts, whether they gain rewards from men, or are disregarded. We shall be always eagerly pressing forward to exertion, while we have still learned, in whatever state God has placed us, therewith to be content; and there will be no fear of such eagerness in youth, controlled by the continual sense of Christ seeing us, leading in manhood to a discontented longing for worldly advancement. We should set side by side the Apostle's two statements:—" I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, for-

getting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" and "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Let us pray God to engrave them both upon our hearts, and then, neither in youth nor in manhood, will there be any fear of our Christian desire to excel degenerating into those worldly longings which destroy the soul.

The Admiration of Men.

[WHEWELL.]

LET us consider how inconsistent with ourselves we should be, if we should bestow our admiration upon men without any regard to the part they bear or have borne in the promotion of the truth among their fellow-men:—if, with all our professed admiration and love for the truth, with all our professed mistrust of human strength and wisdom, we should, in judging of what is wise

and great, fix our eyes on human skill and power, as things admirable in themselves, without regarding the purposes for which they have been employed. We are surely trifling with our better feelings when we admire the strength and skill of the robber or the murderer, and put out of our sight his crime and cruelty: we are no less trifling with our judgment of right and wrong, of true and false, when we bestow our admiration upon any man's acuteness of mind, or eloquence of tongue, or power of binding his fellow-creatures to obey him and to do his will; and think lightly and carelessly of his having employed these powers to diffuse falsehood, to propagate error, to confuse, and perplex, and obscure the truth, to destroy its efficacy and influence over men's minds. If we do this, we do not *cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils*, and take no account of him; but, on the contrary, we take our main account of him: we consider his excellences and powers as the only matters worthy of regard: we allow ourselves to deem as if the breath of man could turn aside the fixed guiding-

marks which point out the directions of right and wrong. We act as if we were obeying a teacher who should exhort us, in a different mood from the prophet in the text (Isaiah ii. 22), and should say to us, Cease ye from thinking ought of any truth which depends not upon the breath of man; for wherein is it to be accounted of?

If we are ever led into this kind of inconsistency and error, it may be of use to us to recollect expressions such as those in the text (and there are many such in the Scriptures), of which the object appears to be, to warn us against this very mistake, and to remind us how worthless and vile are all power, and skill, and knowledge, which is employed to assail, and not to promote the cause of truth. And in surveying the past history and present condition of the world, it may not be useless to have such a monition laid up in the storehouse of the mind, ready to be called into utterance, whenever the occasion may offer itself to us. For undoubtedly there is, in the aspect of human strength of soul and will, in the contemplation of acute and far-reaching intellect, in the

view of skill, and promptitude, and energy of action, something which may often win and draw us, as if with a kind of enchantment. Human feelings and human interests prevail over doctrines, however true, which are not embodied in those human forms. And although, in reality, the highest and most precious human interests, the widest and most lasting human sympathies, are necessarily connected with the establishment and maintenance of the truth; lower, and narrower, and more immediate attractions may warp us towards special objects, and may make us neglect for a time that which alone can hold us firmly to anything. We may be drawn aside by the cords of a man—by wonder, and fear, and pity, by splendour, and strength, and subtlety—and may forget that these ties, however strong and close, will yet in the end break or yield, if they are strained in a direction in which they resist the eternal and adamantine bonds of truth, in which they are employed to prevent and wrest awry the inflexible canons of right and wrong.

Men may be led, for instance, to admire the

conqueror. Kings fly before him. Nations are subjugated to his sway. He unites in his single will the force of millions. All the powers of his own land, the resources of distant regions, the movements of armies and fleets, the hopes and fears of tribes of men,—all these things he wields and moves, as a man, by the inner mechanism of his frame, moves his hands and his arms to strike or to hold. He resists fear and warnings; he traces by his practical insight the trains which bind causes and consequences; he acquires such an ascendency over men that they do not dare to raise their eyes in his presence, and bend before him as if he were something more than mortal. And now how shall *we* regard him? Shall we too stoop and shade our eyes, and tame down our hearts, and give our wonder and our reverence to his greatness and might, without asking to know more than that which we have spoken of? Surely not. Surely we need to know far more than this, before we can tell whether he be worthy of any other feeling than abhorrence. Before we can admire, we must know that he was just, as well as strong;

careful of the goodness of his cause, as well as of the might of his arms; moderate and equitable, in spite of the allurements of success. If, instead of this, he were aggressive, rushing into war as a congenial element, not betaking himself to it as a necessary evil—careless of right, greedy of the possessions of other nations, inflaming his fiercer thoughts, in order to make his course of action more energetic and deadly, disregarding the universal rules of justice which should regulate the acts of nations as of men, and laughing at all suggestions of equity—if the proposed object of admiration were such a man, surely the monitor whom we have invited to abide with us would at once utter his warning, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Or again, suppose that, instead of one who subdues nations by the hands of armed men, and erects for himself an edifice of temporal authority, we have to contemplate a conqueror of another kind, who by his skill in dealing with men's religious hopes and fears, their curiosity and re-

verence with regard to divine things, establishes a despotism over their minds. Such the world has seen, who have wielded numerous and disciplined hosts of priests, as the skilful captain directs his bands of warriors—who have, by their subtlety, and knowledge, and boldness, exercised a more than kingly power over all lands that are called Christian; have subjugated their minds, treated with disdain their existence and independence as nations, pretended to shut the doors of heaven against their prayers, and to prevent the sunlight of God's grace from shining upon them. Are we dazzled with such a manifestation of human wi and audacity; with such a skill in using alike the strength and the weakness of human nature; with such a wide and artful scheme of government of men's spirits; with such a pompous drama, in which emperors are made to play subordinate parts? Surely we are not so led away. Surely there are other things to be considered than these. Life is not a mere play; and men are not mere actors, who may equally win our applause by acting the martyr or the murderer, provided they

act with energy and consistency. Surely our minds are enfeebled and perverted, when we allow them to lean towards such a view. Surely, when we thus deem, we have forgotten for the time our reverence for the truth of God. Is it not truth that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world? and how can this truth be more plainly violated than when men pretend, in the name of Christ, to pull down and set up the kingdoms of this world? Is it not a truth that the powers that be in each nation are ordained of God? and how can this truth be more despised than when men disobey the powers that be, in order to conform to the commands of men belonging to another earthly city and another worldly polity. Is it not as contrary to a regard for truth and justice, for national independence and spiritual freedom, for the rights of men and the claims of God, to gaze with unchecked admiration upon the spiritual, as upon the martial conqueror? Can we fail to recollect, with indignation and grief, what wickedness, what falsehood, what fraud, what tyranny, have accompanied such usurpations of power as

those of which we speak? And shall we not, in this case, too, listen to the monitor when he cries to us, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

But yet again. Let us suppose that we are invited to admire a man who exercises over men's minds a sway of another kind—one who can enter into all the impulses of joy and hope, the vehement and turbulent passions, the gorgeous visions, the wild and dark imaginations which hold their daily and nightly course through the souls of men; who can clothe all such thoughts, though so dim, and fleeting, and hard to seize, in bright, and fluent, and melodious words; who can hold to men's minds, as it were, a wondrous glass, in which they see their own internal movements reflected, but with a strange and startling vividness, and hear, the while, the internal voice of their hearts echoed in strains of significant music. If such men are presented to our notice, shall we forthwith give ourselves up to an admiration bestowed upon this music, this brilliance, this art of self-reflection? Shall we not rather inquire,

first, whether there be, in the exercise of this skill, that element of vital truth, without which nothing which man does can be worthy of admiration? And if it appear that he who is master of this light and this music is careless of good and evil; that he dwells, and leads us to dwell, on fierce and foul passions, revenge and pollution, fraud and treachery, as well as upon love and justice, and purity and faith, and apparently dwells on all with an equal eye, as an indifferent spectator of all; and if his imagination be alike a willing handmaid of these various emotions and impulses, flinging her embroidered and many-coloured robes over virtues and vices with an undistinguishing hand, and perhaps disguising them as if she were desirous that we should not distinguish the one from the other; if he who is offered to us for admiration as one of the sovereigns of the willing soul be thus destitute of a regard for that moral truth which is the universal condition of man's real human nature, surely we shall not join in this worship of skill and sensibility so applied. Surely we shall consider, as more truly

understanding his vocation, that Master of this art who recollected that it was not in artful measures, nor the chime and idle tinkling of the sweetest lyre, to charm his ear whose eye is on the heart, whose frown can disappoint the proudest strains that are at variance with his truth, and whose truth can give a coherency and persuasiveness which nothing else can replace. And if we are called upon to wonder at and delight in any of the utterances of thought, and feeling, and fancy which violate the reverence for that which is right, and true, and good; if we are expected to accept, as sufficiently filling the vacancies left by the want of these great elements, melodious falsehoods and strains poured forth by unlicensed pleasure or uncontrolled passion, shall we not here, too, listen to the teacher, and attend to him when he says to us, "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

But it may be said, that by thus calling upon our hearers to give their reverence to truth, and not to the power, and vigour, and skill, and

knowledge of man, we are taking for granted that we can discern what the truth is, so that we may direct our reverence towards it; whereas, it will perhaps be added, it is most difficult to know what the truth is, in such matters as those on which the differences of men's characters depend. It is easier, it may be said, to determine who among men are strong, and energetic, and sagacious, and skilful, and wise in their generation, than it is to decide among their conflicting opinions, and systems, and aims, what is right, and good, and true. This may occur to some, perhaps, as an answer to the warning which we are attempting to impress upon you, to consider it as the first condition of your bestowing your admiration upon any man, that he should have been engaged in the service of truth. This may offer itself as an answer to our warning; but yet surely this is an answer which of itself implies something from which you would require to be warned. Such a reply would invite the apostle's warning (Heb. iii. 12), "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." For if you

have really laid hold on the truth, you can no longer have any difficulty in determining, at least in a great degree, who have been her servants and friends. Doubtless some truths are of a wider and some of a narrower kind: some prepare the way to others which come afterwards, and satisfy further the craving mind; but yet those who are united by their love of the truth will, for the most part, be united also by their belief that God's good providence has made truth attainable to man, and that man has not been merely baffled and deluded, in his hopes to lay hold on a portion of the precious boon. And believing that they have really attained to the knowledge of that truth which God wills them to know and to hold fast, they cannot—full of gratitude and hope as such a possession must make them—they cannot think it a matter of indifference, in judging of men's characters, and actions, and words, whether they live, and act, and speak on the side of truth or of falsehood. But a deficiency in this trust and gratitude—a persuasion that truth is unattainable; that man has as yet obtained no hold

upon it; that men of all different and opposite opinions may equally be supposed to be on the side of truth; this, no doubt, will make it conceivable why we should look at men's qualities and characters, rather than on the work they have done and the service they have rendered. But then, on the other hand, this would make all man's work, all his service vain, since there is then no good cause which he can further, no edifying truth to which he can add his store, no stability in the results of the past, no hope in the exertions of the future. If this were so, we might indeed alter the prophet's warning, and cry, Cease ye from looking to the cause of truth, as that which determines how a man is to be accounted of; but we might also still cry, Cease ye from looking with any regard upon man, for what is there in which he can be accounted of any value? What purpose can his exertions answer? to what end does he live at all?

Self-Deceit.

[HUSSEY.]

THERE is room for much self-deceit in the differences of conduct which we are inclined to allow ourselves under different circumstances. For is it not the case that men sometimes have, in a manner, two characters—one in their serious moods, another when they are at ease; one in office, in the eye of the world, in any responsible position, where their credit or dignity is at stake, another in private, in their hours of relaxation, in the enjoyment of society? In the former, the highest principles and the greatest and best objects are not only professed, but even intended with sincerity, and followed up for the moment with corresponding actions. But let the occasion pass by, and the very person seems to be changed. And yet men do not disavow their principles, nor deny their character, nor abate their claims to authority: but these considerations seem to be for awhile in abeyance, while the natural inclinations prevail. Thus the mind which seemed to be on some oc-

sion really devoted to Christ, and labouring for his Church, may seem at another time to be the most active among those who are wholly absorbed by the interests of this world: the lips which at one time were preaching glory to God, and peace and good-will to men, at another may indulge themselves in levity and sarcasm, in idle trifling, or vain display, or uncharitable censures, in the current style of conversation; they whose business it is to minister in the congregation of Christ's flock may be engrossed by amusements, the keenest and the readiest perhaps among those who make sports their business. Need I mention one inconsistency more? They who profess themselves members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, may be sometimes found to allow themselves deliberately in occasional acts of known sin, without intending thereby to disown their Christian profession, to renounce their Christian vow, or to forfeit their hope of the future. But this, perhaps, it may be said, can hardly be counted for self-deceit; it is too deliberate to have that excuse, it is the wilful love

of sin. If there be any who can persuade themselves that they may, as it were, lay aside the Christian law of holiness while they gratify themselves in the sins to which they are most tempted, and then return again to the Christian character, they are indeed fatally deceived. Let me earnestly warn all who are here against such a delusion. He who would be the disciple of Christ must be so *always*, so far as human infirmity permits.

. . . . . .

Every one, in attempting to judge of his own progress and real condition in Christian life, would claim a right to make his estimate of himself in his most favourable character, in his serious thoughts, his graver occupations, his most important duties and useful works: he would forget or overlook what he was in his lighter moments, when he might have to take into the account time and means wasted, hours of trifling, or vanity, or self-indulgence. But when the actions and the feelings are so different as they may be in the same person in these two different positions, the question may be asked, which is more truly *the man*

himself: the man as he thinks and acts under the restraints of office, or observation, or any other responsibility, or the man as he is when left to himself in freedom and at ease? If men would think it unfair, as they would in many cases, to have their personal qualities judged of by their official acts, without waiting to be seen in other relations of life, we may well doubt whether we shall make a true judgment of ourselves by looking at ourselves in the performance of our serious duties only: we may doubt whether indeed our true *self* be not that light, selfish, vain, envious being, loving the praise of men, full of the cares and intent upon the pleasures of this world, which we find ourselves when left freely to ourselves, rather than such as we seem to be when we have a character to support, full of high resolves, and looking only to the highest ends. As we know that "where the treasure is, there the heart will be also" (Matt. vi. 21), so we may infer that where the heart *is*, there the treasure *is* in reality; and consequently, if it is in the amusements, the relaxations, and the *reliefs* of life that men find

their *pleasure*, rather than in the duties which are done with an effort, we cannot but fear that the former will sometimes give a truer picture of *the man* in his real character, and exhibit his real condition, how far he is or is not *conformed to the image of* Christ, more exactly than those things to which he would *like* to appeal as evidence of himself.

Counterfeit Meekness.

[ARCHBISHOP SUMNER.]

I WOULD clear true meekness from the adulteration of counterfeits: it has no connection with a certain weakness of principle, which may be glad to shelter itself under so respectable a name. It is not meekness for a man to have no character, no opinion of his own; to adopt the tone and sentiments of whatever company he may happen to be in; to take his standard of religion or morals from those around him; to be a Christian among Christians, or a man of the world among the *children of this generation.* It is not true meekness, to be without a firm, consistent, settled cha-

racter, which shows where it has been stamped, and exhibits the title and superscription which it bears.

For example: it is not meekness to sit by, and hear religion, or religious characters disparaged, without owning our own sentiments, and bearing such testimony as the occasion requires, and is consistent with sound discretion. It is by bearing such testimony, that truth is propagated: it is by refusing it, that errors prevail, and become inveterate. So far from this being praiseworthy, nothing is more hurtful; nor is any faculty more to be imitated, or more to be cultivated, than that of wisely maintaining truth or reproving error in our ordinary intercourse with other men. The effect often verifies the remark of Solomon, "A word spoken in good season, how good is it!" Indeed, such conduct is almost sure to follow, where the heart is sincerely impressed. We find this in the behaviour of St Paul at Athens" (Acts xvii.). He does not seem to have gone to that city with an express commission or intention to preach the Gospel there, but was expecting Silas

and Timotheus, whom he had commanded "to come to him with all speed. And while he waited for them his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him." And the reward of his holy boldness in a good cause, will commonly be the reward of similar conduct in similar circumstances. Though some mocked, and others put the subject aside to another time, "certain men clave unto him, and believed." So, although some will adhere to errors, however successfully exposed, and others will remain rooted in their prejudices, however unreasonable they may be shown to be, yet some will often be awakened to inquiry, which may be blessed to the welfare of the soul. Much is often gained by making it appear that we are in earnest in the cause of religion; much must be lost by letting this remain doubtful.

Neither, again, is it meekness to lose any opportunity of reproving and correcting vice. I do

not speak now of the ministers of religion, whose business, of course, it is to be instant on all occasions in pointing out to a sinner the error of his way; but I speak of all who have influence or authority over others; whether it be the authority of birth or situation, or the influence of friendship, or of superior talent and education. It was a precept in the Hebrew law, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." (Lev. xviii. 17.) Eli, the high-priest of Israel, offended against this precept in the worst way—he suffered his own sons to commit iniquity without restraint; and thus he drew down on himself the severe anger of the Lord. God said, that he would "judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knew; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." (1 Sam. iii. 13.) Similar weakness, at a time when we are called upon to speak openly and "quit ourselves like men" in the cause of God, is always hateful to Him whom we profess to serve. It shows an indifference whether God is obeyed or no, which is quite inconsistent with

zeal in his service; it shows a carelessness in regard to sin, which is quite inconsistent with a due sense of its awful consequences. Indeed we daily find that where these feelings are duly entertained, the heart will vent itself. It will feel as David felt, when he exclaims, "Mine eyes gush out with tears for the ungodly which forsake thy law." (Psalm cxix. 53.) And it will show itself by firmness, like that of the penitent on the cross, who gave a lively proof of a heart touched by divine grace, when he reproved the wickedness of his companion in suffering. "One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on" our crucified Redeemer, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" And "we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss." (Luke xxiii. 41.) This was true courage —to defend the right, but weaker cause—to defend it when it seemed weakest; and it was shown in the full spirit of meekness and humility.

I have said thus much on what is not meekness, because, though meekness is not a natural virtue, silence in the cause of religion is but too natural an error, and young persons ought to be aware that it is an error, and not a virtue. A Christian spirit is habitually retired and unobtrusive, while vice has not only the majority on its side, but is overbearing and domineering. But this, though it make the duty more difficult and painful, especially to some tempers, does not make it less a duty, "to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." (Eph. v. 15.) It is impossible to say how far some of the worst and commonest vices, such as swearing, indecent conversation, and jesting upon sacred subjects, might be restrained, if all those who do not join in them, and even abhor them in their hearts, were to express their disapprobation in an open and decided manner. I might add with truth, though I dare not urge it as a motive, that such conduct is always respected even by those who are opposed by it,

where it is seen to be sincere, and where the spirit of MEEKNESS is preserved.

The Rule of Behaviour in God's House.*

[WORDSWORTH.]

DAYS and years roll on. The hopes and pursuits of men vanish away. And little as we may now regard either duty or privilege, or greatly as we may now abuse them, the hour will arrive ere long to the very youngest amongst us, in which the opportunities of God's worship mis-spent or profaned will appear in their true light; and when the words which the Psalmist has put into our mouth must *justify* or *condemn us:* "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." (Psalm xxvi. 8.) Let us, therefore, pray for "grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for," adds the apostle, "our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. xii. 29.) Let us be as-

* Delivered at Winchester College.

sured that here, as in every other house of the Most High, there is *a mystic ladder*, whereby, though we see it not, the angels of God ascend and descend upon all who worship in spirit and in truth: that the Lord is surely in this place, though we know it not; that this, our *Bethel*, is not only a House of God, but "a gate of heaven" to all who are of the true Israel; that here we may hold communion with the Saviour, as a man converses with his friend. Let me exhort you, by the glory of God and by the awful apprehensions which a sense of his more immediate presence is calculated to inspire; by the "beauty of holiness" in which we are taught to worship; by every prayer of our admirable service, in which we adore God's infinite perfections, or confess our own vileness and wretchedness, our manifold necessities and absolute dependence upon Him; by the innumerable benefits we have already received from Him, and by the hope of future mercies, both here and hereafter; by the teaching and example of our blessed Lord, and by our mystical union with Him and with each other; by the sacraments

and ordinances of his Church, of which we are all partakers; by the obligations to personal holiness and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; by that fearful threat, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy;" and by the debt of gratitude we owe to Him, by whose munificence "we are here brought up in godliness and the studies of good learning;" by "all these solemn and affecting sanctions," let me beseech you one and all to be watchful over yourselves in "the House of God;" so that *one and all*, with hearts alive to the purposes for which we are here assembled, we may glorify him in our bodies and in our spirits, which are his; even as we hope, *one and all*, to sing together in the temple of the Lamb, before whose bright and *visible presence* is the fulness of joy for evermore: to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, in this and in all other Churches of the Saints, all glory and honour, dominion and power, henceforth and for ever!

CHAPTER IV.

ON PRAYER.

Prayer.

[TRENCH.]

Let not merely the dignity and blessedness of prayer invite us; but let us remember also its absolute necessity, if we would live at all. For what is a Christian man without it? A warrior without his arms in the thick and throng of the battle, that has gone naked into the strife; and if he escape once and twice with no mortal wound, yet is sure sooner or later to fall by the hand of the enemy. How many there may be among us at this time, my brethren, that are neglecting to put on this armour of God, or are wearing it only too seldom and too carelessly. The days are evil, the times perilous (for all times are such), the flesh is weak, and the way narrow, and the adversaries many, and yet many of us are walk-

ing carelessly and at random, as though we were not in an enemy's country, as though there were no secret ambush, no open violence to fear. Oh, my brethren, how many saddened hearts there have been, it may be there now are, among the homes of England, saddened on account of beloved ones that in this place* have broken their early vows, made shipwreck of the fair promises of a youthful piety; under the stress of new temptations, have forgotten the sanctities of those homes, rendered themselves unworthy of that holy love which once awaited, and (though now a sorrowing love) which still awaits them there. And this, how came it to pass—how came it that they forgat that voice in which a heavenly and an earthly love seemed alike to speak unto them, and to say, "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine?" If we might read the inner history of those fallen souls, of how many we should find the beginnings of their falling away to have been in this, that they left unfrequented

* Delivered at Cambridge.

the way that leadeth up to the throne of grace, that by little and little the secret offices of devotion were neglected by them, first carelessly performed, then entirely omitted; and thus they lay bare and open to the assaults of the adversary: temptation was strong, and they were weak; the enemy watchful, and they sleeping. What other issue could have been than that which has been? What wonder that they who were so joyful, go now sad, and drooping, and sorrowful, with their brows no longer crowned with the fresh garlands of a springing hope, but too surely showing how another has taken their crown?

While, then, prayer has this dignity, and this blessedness, and is this necessary condition of our stability, let us carry away with us, my brethren, a few never superfluous words concerning the things which are to be feared either as hindering us in it, or turning us away from it altogether. And first, in the earnestness of an onward purpose, let us refuse to listen to the pretended difficulty of a shallow philosophy, which yet will sometimes find an echo in the hollow places of

our own hearts—I mean this, What can prayer do to change the purposes of God? must it not be idle words, breath spent in vain? for is not He immutable? is not unchangeableness among the very perfections of his being? Even so—but it is unchangeableness of character: it is his love, his holiness, his goodness, his power, these that are immutable, that know neither variableness nor shadow of turning, these in which He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And therefore, *because* these are unchangeable, the outcomings and manifestations of them are ever changing, ever varying according to the needs and moral conditions of men. He is no fixed Fate, but a living God. That which He could not give and would not to the proud rebel, He can and will give to the contrite suppliant. Ananias whom He could not send to Saul breathing out slaughter, He can charge with a message of grace to Paul, "for behold he prayeth." The gift which He could not give to the heart shut up in its self-sufficiency and pride—for there was no place to put it in—He can give to the same heart, when it

has learned to long for, when it has been dilated to receive, the heavenly boon. He is always ready to give, but we are not always ready to receive: now in prayer is the preparation and enlarging of the heart for receiving. God is Light and the author of light, but our spiritual eye has often become troubled, often diseased, and so inapt to drink in that light, which should enter in and leave no dark place in our whole body. But in prayer there is a turning again of this diseased spiritual eye unto Him, and through this turning a making of it single again, a restoring its powers of receiving and rejoicing in that pure light of truth, which, while that eye too intently gazed upon meaner things, it had in part forfeited and lost.

Once more, brethren, let us beware in our daily walk of everything that will indispose and unfit us for communion with God—the companions, for instance, from whose presence we shall feel it a kind of contradiction to pass into the presence of God—the worldly thoughts of ambition, of covetousness, of pride, which, if indulged in freely and without restraint at other times, will not, even

though we bid them, give place at these times; which, if we allow to make commonly a beaten highway of our heart, will not leave that heart at a moment's warning a sanctuary and a temple; but will still keep thronging in, will light like unclean birds, spoiling our sacrifice, and we shall not be able, like Abraham, to fray them away, but shall discover now, that it is a small gain to shut the door of our chambers, when we cannot shut the door of our hearts; and shall reap in the inability to do so the sad fruits of our own lack of watchfulness in times past, of our unchecked indulgence in such thoughts as should have been restrained and rebuked from the outset.

Oh, brethren, believe that we cannot let the winds blow from the four corners of the world, stirring our hearts into restless agitations, and then at the moment when we will command a calm. None but the Prince of peace could do this, even in the world of outward nature, much less in the troubled sphere of the human heart. Let us evermore ask of Him that He would keep our spirits from these turbulent disquietudes, or,

if we are visited with such, that He would command them to be gone, that He would, as He only can, bid these winds and these waters of our troubled hearts to be still. Let us ask this, for it is only the calm waters that reflect and image in their bosom the calm heavens which are above; others give back no reflection, or a troubled and distorted one at the best.

I will mention yet another hindrance unto prayer. We may be tempted, probably we all have been at times, to grudge the necessary time. It has seemed to us too much to give; and this especially under the stress of some urgent business, or in seasons when we are devoted, and rightly so, to some engrossing studies. And yet, if we would realise this, that God is the true fountain of all wisdom and of all knowledge—the author of all order in our thoughts, of all discipline in our affections—if only we would keep in mind how there is nothing that breaks down the powers even of the intellect so surely as sensual sin, nothing which narrows its capacities so effectually as a permitted worldliness, we should count

that time well bestowed which consecrates all our other times, which is spent in seeking that grace which is to keep us pure in our affections, and to keep us free in our minds. We should not then be tempted to diminish these the first fruits of our time, or to look at them with a grudging eye, but rather to offer them unto God with a larger dedication. For as no man ever was made poorer by giving freely unto God of his worldly substance, but in a thousand ways it has come back to him, while he that stints and withholds is almost sure to be punished even in that very mammon which he is showing to be dearer to him than all the promises of God—and a breaking bank or a faithless friend, a civil tumult or a midnight conflagration, will snatch from the niggard in a moment a hundred times as much as he has unduly withholden, and leave, too, no blessing behind—so to give to God of his time never left any with a scantier time for his appointed tasks, with less readiness or with fewer opportunities for patient study, for enduring labour, for earnest thought; but has rather fitted and disci-

plined him for these, and insured to him far larger and far richer results, than he would otherwise have reaped, had he continued in the barrenness of his selfish and separate nature.

Let us meet, then, and put by these temptations and these hindrances, these and others which no doubt we shall abundantly find. Let us watch against everything that would tempt us to slur over our acts of worship—to thrust them into obscure corners of our day, or to thrust them out of it altogether. Let us beware of suffering them to give way unto other things, instead of making other things give way unto them—of omitting or cutting them short upon trivial and light excuses. No doubt in all this we shall have need of self-denial, but what that is worth winning or keeping was ever won or kept without it? We shall have need often to deny our thoughts, refusing to let them run in the channels which they would willingly have chosen—need often to break off from pleasant society, need to redeem time from unprofitable sloth. And in other ways we may sometimes find the task we have undertaken hard,

demanding patience, demanding faith. For it is not with us as with the angels: they never need laboriously to seek, for they do always as with open face in beatific vision behold the countenance of God. They need not patiently to knock, for the door of heavenly contemplation, yea, rather of ecstatic adoration, stands ever open unto them. With us it *must* be otherwise—where there has been a wandering away, there must be a seeking before a finding; where there has been sickness and death, it must be often with our labour and with our pain that the life will come back, that the new life-blood, the Spirit of Grace, will force its way through the obstructed channels of our souls.

But neither let this hinder us, being prepared for and expecting no less; and one thing always remembering, that neglects and omissions in this matter are the most certain signs of an approaching fall, while through them the inner life and strength of the soul is little by little eaten out. It is true that these neglects and these omissions may go on for awhile, side by side with a decent outward conversation, yet only for awhile. For

soon it shall be as when, after a gusty night, we go forth and mark some tree that is levelled with the ground; at the first we wonder that it should have fallen so easily, it seemed to stand so strong, its leaves were thick upon it—it had even put forth some promises of fruit. But we go nearer, and then the wonder is solved: the inner heart of the tree was decayed, its roots were shallow, running along the surface, instead of striking deeply into the ground, or grappling firmly with the soil, and so when the winds came there was no power of resistance, but all was ready for a fall. Thus will it be, my brethren, when the blasts of temptation come, as come they inevitably must, with the man that has not a deep inner life, a life hidden with Christ in God, that is not rooted and grounded in Him. Which of us is preparing such a fall and overthrow for himself? Even he to whom habits of devotion are unknown, or to whom, having once been familiar, they now have become strange, who is walking through this world, through its so many and so great dangers, as fearing nothing, and therefore having every-

thing to fear: who is therefore going on from weakness to weakness, instead of advancing, as do the earnest suppliants, the faithful in Christ Jesus, from strength to strength, till of them there appeareth every one before the Lord in Zion.

How to Nourish the Spirit of Prayer.

[ARNOLD.]

THE power to walk in the Spirit is given by the Spirit; but either all have not this power, or all do not use it. I think rather it is that all have it not, for if they had it, a power so mighty and so beneficent, they surely could not help using it. All have it not; but I do not say that they all might not have it; on the contrary, all might have it, but in point of fact they have it not. They have it not because they seek it not; for an idle wish is one thing; a steady, persevering pursuit is another. They seek not the Spirit by the appointed means, the means of prayer and attending to God's holy Word, and thinking of life, and death, and judgment.

Do those seek the Spirit of God who never pray to God? Clearly they do not. For they who never pray to God never think of Him; they who never think of Him, by the very force of the terms it follows that they cannot seek his help. And yet they say, "Oh, I wish to be good, but I cannot!" But this, in the language of the Scripture, is a lie. If they did wish to be good, they would seek the help that could make them so. There is no boy so young as not to know that, when temptation is on him to evil, prayer to God will strengthen him for good. As sure as we live, if he wished really to overcome the temptation, he would seek the strength.

Consider what prayer is, and see how it cannot but strengthen us. He who stands in a sheltered place, where the wind cannot reach him, and with no branches over his head to cause a damp shade, and then holds up his face or his hands to the sun in his strength, can he help feeling the sun's warmth? Now, thus it is in prayer: we turn to God, we bring our souls, with all their thoughts and feelings, fully before Him; and by the very

act of so doing, we shelter ourselves from every chill of worldly care, we clear away every intercepting screen of worldly thought and pleasure. It is an awful thing so to submit ourselves wholly to the influence of God. But do it; and as surely as the sun will warm us if we stand in the sun, so will the Giver of light and life to the soul pour his Spirit of life into us; even as we pray, we become changed into his image.

This is not spoken extravagantly. I ask of any one who has ever prayed in earnest, whether, for that time, and while he was so praying, he did not feel, as it were, another man; a man able to do the things which he would; a man redeemed and free. But most true is it that this feeling passes away but too soon, when the prayer is done. Still, for the time, there is the effect; we know what it is to put ourselves, in a manner, beneath the rays of God's grace; but we do not abide there long, and then we feel the damp and the cold of earth again.

Therefore, says the Apostle, "Pray without ceasing." If we could literally pray always, it is

clear that we should sin never: it may be thus that Christ's redeemed at his coming, as they will be for ever with Him and with the Father, can therefore sin no more. For where God is, there is no place left for sin. But we cannot pray always; we cannot pray the greatest portion of our time; nay, we can pray, in the common sense of the term, only a very small portion of it. Yet, at least, we can take heed that we do pray sometimes, and that our prayer be truly in earnest. We can pray then for God's help to abide with us when we are not praying; we can commit to his care, not only our hours of sleep, but our hours of worldly waking. "I have work to do, I have a busy world around me; eye, ear, and thought will be all needed for that work, done in and amidst that busy world; now, ere I enter upon it, I would commit eye, ear, thought, and wish to Thee. Do Thou bless them, and keep their work Thine; that as, through Thy natural laws, my heart bleeds and my blood flows without my thought for them, so my spiritual life may hold on its course, through Thy help, at those

times when my mind cannot consciously turn to Thee to commit each particular thought to Thy service."

But I dare not say that by any the most urgent prayers, uttered only at night and morning, God's blessing can thus be gained for the whole intervening day. For, in truth, if we did nothing more, the prayers would soon cease to be urgent; they would become formal—that is, they would be no prayers at all. For prayer lives in the heart, and not in the mouth; it consists not of words, but wishes. And no man can set himself heartily to wish twice a-day for things, of which he never thinks at other times in the day. So that prayer requires in a manner to be fed, and its food is to be found in reading and thinking; in reading God's Word, and in thinking about Him, and about the world as being his work.

Young men and boys are generally, we know, not fond of reading for its own sake; and when they do read for their own pleasure, they naturally read something that interests them. Now, what are called serious books, including certainly

the Bible, do not interest them, and therefore they are not commonly read. What shall we say, then? Are they not interested in becoming good, in learning to do the things which they would? If they are not, if they care not for the bondage of sin and death, there is, of course, nothing to be said; then they are condemned already; they are not the children of God. But one says, "I wish I could find interest in a serious book, but I cannot." Observe again, "Ye cannot do the things that ye would," because the flesh and the spirit are contrary to one another. However, to return to him who says this, the answer to him is this—"The interest cannot come without the reading; it may, and will come with it." For interest in a subject depends very much on our knowledge of it; and so it is with the things of Christ. As long as the life and death of Christ are strange to us, how can we be interested about them? but read them, thinking of what they were, and what were their ends, and who can help being interested about them? Read them carefully, and read them often, and they will bring before our minds the

very thoughts which we need, and which the world keeps continually from us, the thoughts which naturally feed our prayers; thoughts not of self, nor selfishness, nor pleasure, nor passion, nor folly, but of such things as are truly God's—love, and self-denial, and purity, and wisdom. These thoughts come by reading the Scriptures; and strangely do they mingle at first with the common evil thoughts of our evil nature. But they soon find a home within us, and more good thoughts gather round them, and there comes a time when daily life with its various business, which once seemed to shut them out altogether, now ministers to their nourishment.

Wherefore, in conclusion, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but do even the things which ye would. And ye can walk in the Spirit, if ye seek for the Spirit; if ye seek Him by prayer, and by reading of Christ, and the things of Christ. If we will do neither, then most assuredly we are not seeking Him; if we seek Him not, we shall never find Him. If we find Him not, we shall never be able to do the

things that we would; we shall never be redeemed, never made free, but our souls shall be overcome by their evil nature, as surely as our bodies by their diseased nature, till one death shall possess us wholly, a death of body and of soul, the death of eternal misery.

Watching and Prayer the Christian Securities.

[BISHOP HAMPDEN.]

It is important to mark that the two methods of guarding against a surprise in the coming of the day of the Lord, are required to be used *together*. "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always," are the words of Christ closely uniting the two. So also St Peter says, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." (1 Peter iv. 7.) And so in our Saviour's affecting exhortation to his disciples, during the scene of his vehement intercession with the Father, before his crucifixion; "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." (Matt. xxvi. 41.) It is not enough, that we bear a lively recollection of the love of Christ towards us in all

our intercourse with the world; but we must continually be *pleading* with the Father our interest in the Atonement of his Son. We must not only *feel* that we owe ourselves to Christ: but we must *lift up* our hearts in the strength of the Redemption: importuning God, by what he has already done for us in giving us his Son, to give us all things whereof we have need both for life and godliness. Prayer is dead, unless it be the prayer of the wakeful soul—unless it be the dictate of a habitual dependence on the Redeemer. Watching against the temptations of the world by faith in Christ is a vain waking of the soul, unless it be a vigil of the Lord that we keep—exercising our hearts and tongues in communion with Him. In fact, a thankful remembrance of the death and sacrifice of Christ, and communion with God in prayer, are inseparable parts of the Christian life. And therefore each must be so exemplified in us, that it may draw after it the other. Whenever we pray to God, it must be *Christian* prayer that ascends—it must be the incense of the Atonement rising from the heart. The "golden vials full of

odours" which are described in the apocalyptic vision, are "the prayers of *saints*" (Rev. v. 8)—the prayers of those who have been sanctified as children of God in Christ. A heathen may pray to God as the creature of natural Providence. A Christian must pray to God *as* a Christian; as one who knows that he is God's by a second creation; as one who acknowledges God as the Head of the kingdom of grace.

"Watch ye, therefore, and pray always," my brethren, "that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." God will mercifully look upon you with his favour, if you be found among those who are thus waiting for your Lord; and will finally admit you to that place prepared for the redeemed, where your happiness shall be endangered no more. You will thus "be accounted worthy," says the text. This does not mean that our watching and prayers will, after all, be of any meritorious effect: for we can never *earn* our salvation: though the eye of faith never slumbered, and though our prayers

sent up their unintermitted sweet incense to the throne of grace, we can never appear *worthy* in the sight of God. But we may be *privileged* by his grace to inherit a recompense, which we cannot ever *deserve*. And this is the force of the passage before us. "Watch and pray always," in order that ye may be *privileged* "to escape," and "to stand before the Son of man." As the prayers and the alms of the unconverted Cornelius came up for a memorial before God, and obtained for him a special call to the knowledge of the Gospel, so will your faithful watching, and your unwearied prayer, come up before Him, and cause you to be remembered by Him in the great day of judgment. In that day He will look on you, and know you to be of those whom He has adopted as sons—whom his Well-beloved died to save—whom his Holy Spirit has anointed and sanctified to life eternal.

Christian Dependence on Prayer.

[JELF.]

A CONFIDENCE in God, such a confidence as shall exclude all independent trust in ourselves, and all fear as to the wisdom and goodness of his providential disposal of events, is absolutely necessary to the character of Christ's disciples, and it must be carried into every particular of our lives. And yet, while we submit our innocent wishes to the good pleasure of our Almighty Father, we are not called upon to stifle them altogether. Christian resignation is not perfect without the use of prayer, and yet prayer is relative to some actual wish. Resignation implies the existence of our own will, but as to its fulfilment makes it subordinate to his will, who is Lord of all. "Not my will, but thine be *done.*" It is not therefore a *sense* of our own wants, spiritual and temporal, which is forbidden, but a distrustful anxiety. The wants do and will exist; the wishes corresponding to those wants will arise in the heart: and the expression of those wishes is not only permitted, but expressly

enjoined. The very earnestness of the prayer marks the intensity of the wish; and the intensity of the wish makes the resignation which surrenders it, by God's grace, more complete. Hence it is, that in the very same sentence in which the Apostle forbids over-anxiety, he recommends resort to prayer and supplication, as the proper vent of our natural feelings. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

How few Pray as they Ought.

[JELF.]

THE value of prayer, under whatever aspect we may regard it, can hardly be over-rated. An instrument is offered to us, compendious and simple in its construction, yet of incalculable power; compounded simply of the motion of the faithful heart, and of the vehicle of words, conceived or uttered, yet rising as incense from earth to heaven; complete in an ejaculation, yet capable of being expanded, in all "the beauty of holiness," to the

utmost variety of liturgical forms; ready for use in every emergency; always at hand, in doubt, in difficulty, in danger, in temptation; suited to all times and places, accessible to all kindreds, nations, and languages; requiring in its essence no preparative or auxiliary circumstances; separable from each of the other instruments of sanctification, yet indefinitely increasing in intensity when used in combination with them all; adapted alike to the inner chamber of the single worshipper, to the domestic Church in the Christian household, or to the crowded temple and the conspiring voice of multitudes; an instrument provided and revealed by God himself, to bring the Divine Being into closer union with man! How is it, then, that we neglect so great salvation? How is it that so many children of God turn away from their Father, and refuse to ask Him for that which is indispensable, for the necessaries of spiritual life? that of those who do ask Him so few ask aright? that no one has ever attained to the full perfection of prayer? How accessible is this blessed privilege to all! yet by how few ever attained! How

easy in appearance, indeed, in its own essence! yet, for our corrupt nature, yea, and for our regenerate faculties, how inconceivably difficult it is to ask! And yet in all these contradictions there is nothing to surprise us; they are but the inevitable phenomena of the conflict which Satan, the prince of corruption, is carrying on against the Holy Ghost, the Lord of grace and life. So long as the temple is guarded by the indwelling Spirit, it is an impregnable fortress against the assaults of the evil one. Whatever, therefore, brings the grace of God to aid us, is an especial object of the enemy's attack. Hence his unceasing efforts to depreciate and to nullify each and all of the means of grace, and prayer, perhaps, more unceasingly than any other, and prayer for grace most of all. Hence wandering and unsteady thoughts, intrusion of worldly objects into our devotions, forgetfulness of Christ's presence in his very house of prayer, the honouring of God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him; the *means* for a time mechanically continued, but their *purpose* lost sight of by degrees; the gradual abridg-

ment of our petitions, occasional postponements, lengthened interruptions, total neglect; floating doubts as to the efficacy of prayer, settled down into absolute scepticism; scoffing at prayer, derision of all *means*, denial of all *grace*. "An enemy hath done this." Gradually, but surely, his work is done. And thus the man over whom his parents wept in hope and gladness as a child of God, is taught to do "despite to the Spirit of grace," to banish Him from his heart, and to become once more a subject of Satan and a child of wrath.

The first prayer, then, which we have to offer, is that we may have grace to pray. And yet our own efforts, however naturally helpless, owing, as they do, *all* their strengh to the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, are, nevertheless, absolutely needed. We must "watch and pray, lest" we "enter into temptation;" but to watch, to keep the soul awake, requires the most determined exercise of the *will* of the inner man. Whatever tends to quicken our dead desires, to kill the world and the flesh within us, to keep under the body, to give the ascendency to the soul, is a fit preparation for prayer.

CHAPTER V.

ON BOOKS AND THE BIBLE.

The Choice of Reading.

[BISHOP WORDSWORTH.]

FOR the occupation and entertainment of your minds at your leisure hours, what kind of books you may best read at such times as are left to your own disposal—this is a matter of which the responsibility is mainly or entirely your own. And I do beseech you to consider how very great, how very serious a thing your responsibility is in this respect. For, I need scarce observe to you, it is in the free and spontaneous action of the mind that our love is truly shown; and if, so soon as the matter is left to your own choice, you choose to employ your mind upon anything that is evil, upon anything that is ungodly—I ought rather to say upon anything that is not positively

good—where is your love of God with the mind? God cannot intend that you should employ his gift in the service of his enemy; in familiarity and communion with that which is merely of the world, and of worldly-mindedness, with "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Therefore the very least that we can do in obedience to this command, is to refrain our minds from the perusal of all such things as, so far from tending to promote God's glory, have a tendency directly the reverse. And here let me remind you again of that to which I before alluded—viz., how very great and momentous is the influence which the employment of the mind has upon the condition of the heart. The healthiness of the heart cannot but depend in a very great degree upon the quality of the food and entertainment which the mind receives; just as the head is wont to be affected by the healthy or disordered action of the stomach: and to hope to love God with all our hearts, while we neglect to love Him with our mind, is idle and impossible. I put these things before you simply and plainly; but I must leave

you to judge of the application of them, in great measure, for yourselves. I address you, my brethren, as those who *know* that it is your first duty to love God, and who desire honestly to be told the way. I say, that you must not choose to occupy your minds—no, not for a moment—with anything that is evil; for this is inconsistent with the love of God. What books are evil, you must either inquire of others, or you must judge for yourselves. But I may so far assist your judgment, as to give you this one rule:—Have the Bible always, as it were, at your right hand, and let the book that is at your left hand be no unfit companion for it. If you cannot pass with a safe and with a pure conscience from the reading of the one to the reading of the other, be sure the book has no tendency to God's glory; and, as such, is not fit entertainment for the mind of one who desires to love God wholly and sincerely. And as you will read nothing that is plainly at variance with God's law, so you will judge of all that you do read by the standard of that law; you will be pleased or offended, you will approve

or condemn, according as God's law requires; that so, "by reason of this use," as the Apostle speaks, "you may have your senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb. v. 14.) And that you may be able to do this, I need scarcely say you must be very conversant with that law; you must not only set the Bible, as I have said, at your right hand, but you must make it a main portion of what you read. There are many people who read a newspaper daily, who would think that they had *lost a day* if they should ever miss to do so, but who, it is to be feared, never read a syllable of God's Word, and never feel that they are losing anything, while they thus deprive their souls of the very bread of life. What should you say of such men? Should you say that they loved God with all their minds? Should you not rather say that they loved this life, and the things of this life, and that they thought very little, and cared very little for the life which is to come? Such people would say, perhaps, that they have not *much* leisure time for reading; but if they have *any*, I leave you to judge whether of

the two should come first, if we really desire to love God and to sanctify our minds to his glory—the daily reading of a newspaper, that tells only of the vain, evil, perishing things of this world; or the daily reading of the Gospel, the glorious tidings of the kingdom of God? I have no need to speak now of the value and necessity of reading the Bible upon other grounds: for the sake of the instruction it contains, of the truth which it reveals; or even because it is the best and most proper food of the mind, and so designed by God, as bread and meat are given to be the best and most proper food of the body. But what I am now saying simply amounts to this: that if we sincerely seek to love God, as He has commanded us, *with all our mind*, there is nothing with which we shall desire our minds to be so much conversant as with *his Word*.

Unity of Life to be Learned from the Unity of Scripture.

[TRENCH.]

HOLY Scripture gives testimony for a pervading unity, an inner law according to which it unfolds itself as a perfect and organic whole, in the epoch at which growth in it ceases, and it appears henceforth as a finished book. So long as humanity was growing, it grew. But when the manhood of our race was reached, when man had attained his highest point, even union with God in his Son, then it comes to a close. It carries him up to this, to his glorious goal, to the perfect knitting again of the broken relations, through the life, and death, and resurrection of Him in whom God and man were perfectly atoned. So long as there was anything more to tell, any new revelation of the name of God, any new relations of grace and nearness into which he was bringing his creatures, so long the Bible was a growing, expanding book; but when all is given, when God, who at divers times spake to the world by his ser-

vants, had now spoken his last and fullest Word by his Son, then to this Book, the record of that Word of his, there is added no more, even while there is nothing more to add; though it cannot end till it has shown in prophetic vision how this latest and highest which now has been given to man, shall unfold itself into the glory and blessedness of a perfected kingdom of heaven.

For thus, too, it will mark itself as one, by returning visibly in its end upon its beginning. Vast as the course which it has traced, it has been a circle still, and in that most perfect form comes back to the point from whence it started. The heaven, which had disappeared from the earth since the third chapter of Genesis, re-appears again in visible manifestation, in the latest chapters of the Revelation. The tree of life, whereof there were but faint reminiscences in all the intermediate time, again stands by the river of the water of life, and again there is no more curse. Even the very differences of the forms under which the heavenly kingdom re-appears are deeply characteristic, marking, as they do, not

merely that all is won back, but won back in a more glorious shape than that in which it was lost, because won back in the Son. It is no longer Paradise, but the New Jerusalem—no longer the *garden*, but now the *city*, of God, which is on earth. The change is full of meaning; no longer the garden, free, spontaneous, and unlaboured, even as man's blessedness in the state of a first innocence would have been; but the city, costlier indeed, more glorious, more wonderful, but, at the same time, the result of toil, of labour, of pains—reared into a nobler and more abiding habitation, yet with stones which, after the pattern of the "elect corner-stone," were each in its time laboriously hewn and painfully squared for the places which they fill.

And surely we may be permitted to observe, by the way, that this idea, which we plainly trace and recognise, of Scripture as a whole, this its architectonic character, cannot be without its weight in helping to determine the canonical place and worth of the Apocalypse, which, as is familiar to many among us, has been sometimes called in

question. Apart from all outward evidences in its favour, do we not feel that this wondrous Book is needed where it is?—that it is the key-stone of the arch, the capital of the pillar—that Holy Scripture had seemed maimed and imperfect without it—that a winding-up with the Epistles would have been no true winding-up; for in them the Church appears as still warring and struggling, still compassed about with the weaknesses and infirmities of its mortal existence—not triumphing yet, nor yet having entered into its glory? Such a termination had been as abrupt, as little satisfying, as if, in the lower sphere of the Pentateuch, we had accompanied the children of Israel to the moment when they were just entering on the wars of Canaan, and no book of Joshua had followed, to record their battles and their victories, and how these did not cease till they rode on the high places of the earth, and rested each man quietly in the lot of his conquered inheritance.

Thus, brethren, we have been led to contemplate these oracles of God in their deep inner

unity; we have seen, not merely how they possess, but how we can reverently trace them in the possession of, that oneness of plan and purpose, which should make them effectual for the unfolding the spiritual life of men. We have seen how men's expectations of finding something there which they did not find, have ever grown out of a mistaken apprehension of what a Scripture ought to be; how the presence of that which they miss would indeed have marred it, would have contradicted its fundamental idea, would have been a discord amid its deep harmonics, even as the discords which men find in it come oftentimes as its highest harmonics to the purged ear. Nor is it without a warning to us that these murmurings and complaints do most often grow out of a moral fault in them that make them. Men have lost the key of knowledge—the master-key which would have opened to them every door; and then they wander with perplexed hearts up and down this stately palace which the Eternal Wisdom has builded, but of which every goodlier room is closed against them, till, in the end, they complain that it is no

such peerless palace after all, but only as other works which man's art has reared. Nor is this strange; for unless they bring to it a moral need, unless that moral need be to them the interpreter of every part, and gather all that is apparently abnormal in it under a higher and reconciling law, the Book, in its deepest meaning and worth, will remain a riddle to them still. And this moral need, what is it? It is the sense that we are sundered and scattered each from God, each from his fellow-man, each from himself—with a faith that it is the will of God to gather all these scattered and these sundered together anew—this, with the conviction which will rise out of this, that all which bears on the circumstances of this recovering and regathering is precious; that nothing is of highest worth which does not bear upon this. Then we shall see in this Word that it is the very history which we require—that altogether, nothing but that—the history of the restoring the defaced image of God, the re-constitution of a ruined but godlike race, in the image of God's own Son—the deliverance of all in that

race, who were willing to be delivered, from the idols of sense, from the false gods who would hold them in bondage, and would fain make them their drudges and their slaves.

And, brethren, what is it that shall give unity to our lives, but the recognition of the same great idea which gives unity to this Book? Those lives, they seem often broken into parts, with no visible connection between one part and another: our boyhood, we know not how to connect it with our youth, our youth with our manhood; the different tasks of our life, we want to bind them up into a single sheaf—to feel that, however manifold and apparently disconnected they are, there is yet a bond that binds them into one. Our hearts, we want a central point for them, as it were a heart within the heart, and we oftentimes seek this in vain. Oh what a cry has gone up from thousands and ten thousands of souls! and this the burden of the cry, I desire to be one in the deep centre of my being, to be one, and not many—to be able to reduce my life to one law—to be able to explain it to myself in the master-

light of one idea, to be no longer rent, torn, and distracted, as I am now.

And whence shall this oneness come? where shall we find, amid all the chances and changes of the world, this law of our life, this centre of our being, this key-note to which setting our lives, their seeming discords shall appear as their deepest harmonies? Only in God, only in the Son of God—only in the faith, that what Scripture makes the end and purpose of God's dealing with his race, is also the end and purpose of his dealing with each one of us—namely, that his Son may be manifested in us; that we, with all things which are in heaven, and all things which are in earth, may be gathered together in Christ, even in Him.

On the Right Method of Reading of the Scriptures.

[ARNOLD.]

It is too common a case to excite our wonder, that knowledge is not always followed by goodness; and we know that without goodness God cannot be glorified. It seems, then, a very difficult thing

to read on a great variety of subjects, and yet read as God's scholars: difficult, as most Christian graces are difficult; but not surely impossible, if we follow the right way of effecting it. Now, we cannot read all things as God's scholars, if we have never been his scholars at all; we cannot find Him, or see Him, by faith, in every place, if we have never learned to know his voice where it speaks in its own proper tones to us. In other words, we cannot make a Christian use of other books, if the Book of God itself be not familiar to us. Nor, again, can we possibly turn common things into our spiritual food: we shall not easily be led to think of the highest things by the study of books on worldly matters, if, even when the occasion directly calls for it, our thoughts are still slow to travel heavenward. I can conceive a man praying in church, or in his own house, at certain stated times of prayer, and yet never thinking of God when he is reading a history or a poem: but it is absolutely impossible that such books should make him think of God, if he does not think of him at other times; if his

prayers be omitted, or said carelessly, it is out of the question that he should feel anything like a devotional spirit when reading the histories, poems, or orations of a heathen. And therefore, if we would learn to read everything as God's scholars, we must at least read the Bible as such —I mean, with a sincere desire to practise it. I am quite sure, that even if the lessons read every Sunday in the Church service were but carefully attended to, there could not be so much ignorance of the Scriptures as we now meet with. Coming over again, as these lessons do, year after year, it would seem no difficult matter to remember them; and although they form only a small part of the whole Bible, yet even these, if thoroughly known, would be of very great service to us. Indeed, if they were well known, we may be pretty sure that more of the Bible would be known also; it is not natural that what we really know should excite in us no interest or curiosity to know more. But, if we do once get a knowledge of the Bible —by which I mean not a knowledge of the mere history and antiquities of the Jews, but of the

principles of life which the Bible teaches, and, above all, that great principle which runs through it from beginning to end, that God should be all in all to us in our lives—then we learn to get that true view of the world and all things in it, which will in a manner perforce present itself to our minds whenever a false view is laid before us. If this be rooted and implanted in us, anything opposite to it will no more fail to bring it vividly before us, than anything that is agreeable to it; nay, I know not that the very contrast does not serve to set it off; and whether the Christian ever feels more keenly awake to the purity of the spirit of the gospel, than when he reads the history of crimes and follies related with no true sense of their evil; or when, in the deepest strains of passionate poetry, all the miseries and all the joys of life are touched upon, save that only misery of sin, which *he* knows to be alone incurable—save that only joy of a heart at peace with God, which he knows to be alone eternal.

We may read all things, then, and yet read all as God's scholars; drawing even from the writ-

ings of those who thought but of evil, or at least were utterly careless of God, a food for holy and spiritual principles to be nourished with. And then we see the force of Christ's words, when he said, that "Every scribe, instructed to the kingdom of heaven, is like unto an householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." The extent and variety of our knowledge, the command of things new and old, of things sacred and things profane, does, indeed, instruct us with tenfold power for the service of the kingdom of God. But if acquired without that knowledge and love of God which can make it minister to his service, then, indeed, it does anything but instruct us to the kingdom of heaven; the exercise of our understanding, if made in such a case our principal employment, is one of the surest and speediest poisons to our souls; there is no evil spirit who may not find room for himself easily in that heart which is occupied only by the gay and yet dead furniture of intellectual knowledge.

Asking Questions of the Bible.

[ARNOLD.]

It is quite clear that what hinders a true understanding of anything is vagueness; and it is by the process of asking questions that vagueness is to be dispelled: for, in the first place, it removes one great vagueness, or indistinctness, which is very apt to beset the minds of many; namely, the not clearly seeing whether they understand a thing or no; and much more, the not seeing what it is that they do understand, and what it is which they do not. Take any one of our Lord's parables, and read it even to a young child; there will be something of an impression conveyed, and some feelings awakened; but all will be indistinct; the child will not know whether he understands or no, but will soon gain the habit of supposing that he does, as that is at once the least troublesome, and the least unpleasant to our vanity. And this same vague impression is often received by uneducated persons from reading or hearing either the Scriptures or sermons; it is by no means the

same as if they had read or heard something in an unknown language; but yet they can give no distinct account of what they have heard or read; they do not know how far they understand it, and how far they do not. Here, then, is the use of "asking questions"—asking questions of ourselves or of our book, I mean, for I am supposing the case of our reading, when it can rarely happen that we have any living person at hand to give us an answer. Now, taking the earliest and simplest state of knowledge, it is plain that the first question to put to ourselves will be, "Do I understand the meaning of all the words and expressions in what I have been reading?" I know that this is taking things at their very beginning, but it is my wish to do so. Now, so plain and forcible is the English of our Bible, generally speaking, that the words difficult to be understood will probably not be many: yet some such do occur, owing, in some instances, to a change of the language; as in the words "let" and "prevent," which now signify, the one, "to allow, or suffer to be done," and the other, "to

stop, or hinder," but which signified, when our translation was made, the first, "to stop or hinder," and the second, "to be beforehand with us;" as in the prayer, "Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favour," the meaning is, "Let thy favour be with us beforehand, O Lord, in whatever we are going to do." In other instances, the words are difficult because they are used in a particular sense, such as we do not learn from our common language; of which kind are the words "elect," "saints," "justification," "righteousness," and many others. Now, if we ask ourselves "whether we understand these words or no," our common sense, when thus questioned, will readily tell us whether we do or not; although, if we had not directly asked the question, it might never have thought about it. Of course, our common sense cannot tell us what the true meaning is; that is a matter of information, and our means of gaining information may be more or less; but still, a great step is gained, the mist is partly cleared away; we can say to ourselves, "Here is something

which I do understand, and here is something which I do not;" I must keep the two distinct, for the first I may use, the second I cannot; I will mark it down as a thing about which I may get explanation at another time; but at present it is a blank in the picture, it is the same as if it were not there." This, then, is the first process of self-questioning, adapted, as I have already said, to those whose knowledge is most elementary.

Suppose, however, that we are got beyond difficulties of this sort—that the words and particular expressions of the Scripture are mostly clear to us. Now, take again one of our Lord's parables; say, for instance, that of the labourers in the vineyard: we read it, and find that he who went to work at the eleventh hour received as much as he who had been working all the day. This seems to say, that he who begins to serve God in his old age shall receive his crown of glory no less than he who has served him all his life. But now try the process of self-questioning: what do I think that Christ means me to learn

from this? what is the lesson to me? what is it to make me feel, or think, or do? If it makes me think that I shall receive an equal crown of glory if I begin to serve God in my old age, and therefore if it leads me to live carelessly, this is clearly making Christ encourage wickedness; and such a thought is blasphemy. He cannot mean me to learn this from it; let me look at the parable again. Who is it who is reproved in those words which seem to contain its real object? It is one who complains of God for having rewarded others equally with himself. Now this I can see is not a good feeling; it is pride and jealousy. In order, then, to learn what the parable means me to learn, let me put myself in the position of those reproved in it. If I complain that others are rewarded by God as much as I am, it is altogether a bad feeling, and one which I ought to check; for I have nothing to do with God's dealings to others; let me think of what concerns myself. Here I have the lesson of the parable complete; and here I find it is useful to me. But if I take it for a different object, and suppose that it means

to encourage waiting till the eleventh hour—waiting till we are old before we repent—we find that we make it out actually to be mischievous to us. And thus we gain a great piece of knowledge; namely, that the parables of our Lord are mostly designed to teach some one particular lesson, with respect to some one particular fault; and that if we take them generally, as if all in them was applicable to all persons, whether exposed to that particular fault or not, we shall absolutely be in danger of deriving mischief from them instead of good. It is true, that in this particular parable the gross wickedness of such an interpretation as I have mentioned is guarded against even in the story itself; because those who worked only at the eleventh hour are expressly said to have stood idle so long only because no man had hired them; their delay, therefore, was no fault of their own. But even if this circumstance had been left out, it would have been just the same; because the general rule is, that we apply to a parable only for its particular lesson, and do not strain it to anything else. Had this been well understood, no

one would have ever found so much difficulty in understanding the parable of the unjust steward.

This is another great step towards the dispelling vagueness, to apply the particular lesson of each part of Scripture to that state of knowledge, or feeling, or practice in ourselves, which it was intended to benefit; to apply it as a lesson to ourselves, not as a general truth for our neighbours. And the very desire to do this makes us naturally look with care to the object of every passage—to see to whom it was addressed, and on what occasion; for this will often surely guide us to the point that we want. But in order to do this, we must strive to clothe the whole in our own common language; to get rid of those expressions which to us convey the meaning faintly; and to put it into such others as shall come most strongly home to us. This I have spoken of on other occasions; and I have so often witnessed the bad effects of not doing so, that I am sure it may well bear to be noticed again; I mean the putting such words as "persecution," "the cares and riches of the world," "the kingdom of God," "confessing

Christ," "denying Christ," and many others, into a language which to us has more lively reality, which makes us manifestly see that it is of us, and of our common life, and of our dangers, that the Scripture is speaking, and not only of things in a remote time and country, and under circumstances quite unlike our own. Therefore I have a strong objection to the use of what is called peculiarly religious language, because I am sure that it hinders us from bringing the matter of that language thoroughly home to us; our minds do not entirely assimilate with it; or if they fancy that they do, it is only by their becoming themselves affected, and losing their sense of the reality of things around them. For our language is fixed for us, and we cannot alter it; and into that common language, in which we think and feel, all truth must be translated, if we would think and feel respecting it at once rightly, clearly, and vividly. Happy is he who, by practising this early, has imbued his own natural language with the spirit of God's wisdom and holiness; and who can see, and understand, and feel them the better,

because they are so put into a form with which he is perfectly familiar.

More might be said, very much more, but here I will now pause. In this world, wherein heavenly things are, after all, hard to seize and fix upon, we have great need that no mists of imperfect understanding darken them, over and above those of the corrupt will. To see them clearly, to understand them distinctly and vividly, may, indeed, after all be vain; a thicker veil may yet remain behind, and we may see and understand, and yet perish. Only the clear sight of God in Christ can be no light blessing; and there may be a hope, that understanding and approving with all our minds his excellent wisdom, the light may warm us as well as assist our sight; that we may see, and not in our vague and empty sense, but in the force of the scriptural meaning of the word, —may see, and so believe.

CHAPTER VI.

ON SELF-EXAMINATION.

Who is My Neighbour?

[BISHOP WILBERFORCE.]

God has furnished our hearts with instinctive sympathies for those around us. He has, by the constitution of our nature, attached pleasure to the performance of acts of kindness to others; and this He has done to help us to bear the first trouble, self-denial, and sacrifice, which is implied in imparting to others what we might consume upon ourselves. He has placed us in the midst of objects fitted to draw out these emotions. Thus He has provided for us a system of natural discipline and training, in order that we, by acting up to its requirements, may, through the help of his grace, form a character of beneficence like his own; that we may see ourselves to be in a vast dispensation

of his mercy; and all these needy ones around us as related to us—as having ties to us, as being members with us of the great family of Christ's redeemed; and thus a work will pass upon our own moral nature, and from loving our brother we shall, by his good guidance, be led on to that love of Himself, in which is the creature's only true happiness.

Now the work of our natural selfishness is the exact opposite of all this. It begins by leading us to find our gratification in those pleasures which relate especially to ourselves. Thus it clogs the exercise of those benevolent instincts of the heart which are not simply either right or wrong, since the acts prompted by them are done merely as being pleasurable, not as being right, but yet which are intended to help us in the first labour of doing right. And as these natural gifts are neglected, selfishness grows greater in the contracting heart. The man more and more becomes all to himself. Others are now little to him. The sense of relationship is dying out of him. He only owns very close relations as having any claim on

him; and these he only owns because they are a part of himself. He is fond of putting off what he can call more distant claims by saying, that charity begins at home (which, with such men, it very rarely does); he cannot understand why he need be troubled about the sorrows of those no way connected with him. It is no concern of his. He has enough to do to take care of himself. So he loves to speak. The sight of misery is troublesome to him; he would fain avoid it. If he dimly perceives its presence, he passes by on the other side, shrinking even instinctively from the possibility of being claimed as the brother of a sufferer. And soon he not only neglects but misuses others. They are his tools and instruments. By using them, he is to obtain pleasure, or gain, or ease. What they are, or become, is nothing to him. He will build in, without remorse, to the fabric of his own ease, comfort, dignity, or pleasure, their happiness, nay, even their enduring souls. He will satisfy his covetousness at the cost of their peace, or his ambition at the cost of their blood, or his lust at the cost of their souls.

See how in this man the question, and "Who is my neighbour?" is really growing into the cry of the first murderer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" For from giving up the sense of wider relationship, he soon goes on to lose all real sense of the nearest and the closest. First it is himself, and those who are well-nigh part of himself, against the world; but let a question rise, or seem to rise, between himself and even those closest to him, and even they shall be sacrificed. Be they parent, wife, or child, the thoroughly selfish man is ready to use them too, merely as the instruments of gratifying an all-grasping self. He will ruin a child's soul to save himself the trouble of correcting him: he will destroy his family to slake the thirst of drunkenness, to supply appetite with its garbage, or to obtain the mad excitement of gambling. He is all, and they are nothing.

What utter ruin is passing upon this man's soul! How are even the natural instincts by which the early difficulties of doing right were to be aided, dying out within him, instead of being raised, as they should be in the regenerate, into

heavenly graces! How is his heart narrowing and hardening! How are the eyes of his soul darkening! He strains that deadened gaze around a world which is full of sufferers, and he sees nowhere a neighbour to be helped. His deafened ear hears not the groans, and sighs, and lamentations of afflicted humanity, and he asks, as coldly as if no such sounds were nigh him, "And who is my neighbour?" Above all, how surely is this man making it impossible that he should love his God. For "He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how shall he love God, whom he hath not seen?" How shall he who kills within himself the natural instinct of affection for those he sees, ever rise to the high gift of loving God, whom he can know only by his faith? This conduct must be most offensive to the Spirit of God; and under a dispensation of the Spirit, such as is that under which we live, it must therefore be most ruinous to man. It is an intense denial of the work of Christ's cross, whereby He made all men one in the unity of his own body. For the second Adam thus restored all the broken bonds of man's

relationship. Against this great grace the selfish man is a perpetual rebel. And so his soul is becoming every day more utterly at variance with the character of God. To his works of nature, and yet more of grace, it is becoming more harshly discordant. From himself it is daily parted by a more impassable gulf. It is becoming thoroughly unfit to dwell with Him who is perfect love. Surely the full revelation of the Almighty presence would be of itself hell to such a man. He has almost passed into that condition of perfected selfishness, which will secure the fearful perfectness of suffering; when the foul gratifications which stayed its appetite being all removed, the lost soul shall feel itself in the grasp of that Almighty hand which it has made hateful to itself, whilst the gnawings of despair make every other being, yea, and its own self also, only the fit subjects for its active malignity and hate.

The Effect of our Example.

[WHATELY.]

THAT one man's eternal salvation should be suffered to depend, in any degree, on the conduct of another, is a most awful mystery. That our diligent exertions, or remissness- -our good or bad example, the wise or unwise measures we adopt, should in any case make the possible difference of eternal life or ruin, to our children and other dependants—to many of our neighbours, and of our other countrymen —nay, perhaps even to the inhabitants of the remotest regions of the earth, is one of those dispensations of Providence which we cannot explain—which perplexes us whenever we reflect upon it, and which is calculated to fill us with a most anxious, and almost an appalling, sense of our own responsibility.

That the fact is as I have stated, we are compelled to admit. If, through our instruction, admonition, or example, any man is kept steady in the path of duty, or forwarded in his progress, or recalled from sin, no one can doubt that he will

reap the full benefit, though our "labour of love" will not be forgotten by a righteous God; and, on the other hand, it is no less undoubted, that if, through our ill example, or seduction, or connivance, or negligence, another is drawn aside from the right way, or led, or left, to continue in sin or irreligion, he will suffer the penalty, though we shall not escape. That *another* induced him, or allowed him, to forget God, will not be admitted as a valid excuse. "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat," was Adam's excuse for his transgression; but it did not deliver him from the sentence pronounced against it. "I have set thee a watchman," said the Lord to the prophet Ezekiel, "to the house of Israel: if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." "The sons of Eli," we are told, "made themselves vile, and he restrained them not;" *he* was judged for his neglect, but *they* did not escape; and in like manner the Apostle Paul warns us, in his First Epistle to the

Corinthians (chap. viii.), of the mischief which men may do to their brethren, even by such conduct as would otherwise, in itself, be harmless: "Take heed lest this liberty of yours be a stumbling-block to them that are weak: through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" Thus implying the possibility of even the utter loss of a Christian brother, resulting from the misconduct of his neighbour.

Nor will those again stand exempt from the punishment of their sins, who have been left in gross *ignorance* as to religion; though God's judgments will also doubtless fall on those who ought to have instructed them. We are told, indeed, that the sin will be *aggravated* in proportion to the moral and religious knowledge of the sinner; but that a deficiency of such knowledge will not acquit him; on the ground, I suppose, that no one is destitute of the natural faculty of conscience, by which right and wrong may be distinguished: for "the servant who knew not his Lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes; but the servant who knew his Lord's

will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." And it is evident that the knowledge or ignorance of each depends, at least, as much on the conduct of others, as his right or wrong *use* of his knowledge. Thus is man permitted to influence the welfare of his fellow-men, even in what relates to the world to come!

Strange as this dispensation of Providence may seem—though it present a *difficulty*, it cannot be for a moment allowed as an *objection* to our religion, by those, at least, who allow that there is a God, who is the author of the constitution and course of nature in this present world; for the affairs of this life are regulated precisely on the principle I have just been describing. The moral world and the natural world in this respect correspond exactly. For it is plain that the *temporal* welfare of one person is made to depend, in a very great degree, on the conduct of others. As children are not likely to grow up good *Christians* without education and parental care, so they are many years dependent even for their *lives* on a like parental care; and the manner in which they are brought

up may make the difference of success or failure in this life, as well as in what relates to the next life. The untutored African or Indian is as much dependent on his civilised fellow-creatures for a knowledge of the useful arts, as of the truths of the Gospel. Universally, in short, man is placed, in numberless particulars, at the mercy of his fellow-men, and made to depend on them for his well-being. We need not be surprised, therefore (unable as we may be to explain it), at finding, as we do, the eternal interests of our fellow-creatures committed in many respects to our care. It is of a piece with the general plan of Providence, that our conduct should, in various ways and in various degrees, affect the welfare of others.

Instead of inquiring vainly into the reasons of what God has appointed, it befits us better, in the first place at least, to dwell attentively on the awful responsibility under which we live, to contemplate the field of duty which is thus placed before us, and to impress our minds with the thought that he who would insure his own salvation must not be unconcerned about the salvation of his neighbour.

. . . There is no way in which a man can be so *extensively* useful as by the diffusion of religious *knowledge.* Admit that Christian knowledge is but a part, and that the least part, of evangelical religion, still it is not only one essential part of it, but it is the one which we can the most extensively diffuse. It is but a small number that each of us can edify by his example, and a still smaller that he can control by his authority; but he may contribute to promote a wide diffusion of religious instruction. And how well soever he may do his duty by those immediately around him, he must not think this enough, if more can be done in the service of Him who "will have all men," says Paul, "to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." No true disciple of such a Master can be indifferent about adding to the numbers of such disciples; no one can duly value or duly profit by the light of the Gospel shed upon him, who is not anxious to spread the illumination as far as possible over the world.

The Difficulty of Knowing.

[HUSSEY.]

THE Apostle's precept is general—"If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. viii. 2.) This is a judgment so broad and sweeping, that it might not please the ears of some perhaps; yet it is a rule for us all, even for those who have made the most progress. How much more, then, for the young? Let me therefore entreat these, for their own sakes and for the sake of the Church, to be *more ready to hear* than to judge on theological subjects, and to endeavour to learn rather than to give opinions. Modesty is not apathy, and humility is as far as possible from indifference. But there is something strangely out of character, to say nothing stronger, for young persons, of slender information, and perhaps of very imperfectly-formed habits, to use the terms of controversy, and to adopt at once, as their own, definite views on deep and intricate questions concerning religion. Such things are not to be taken

up off-hand, because they are current; but the right understanding them is the result of long and careful inquiry. To be able to judge of these matters, is a thing which may well be desired; but let it be sought by each one in all humility, through improving himself in knowledge and practice. If this is the effect, questions raised about religion will not prove so great an evil as at first sight they might seem.

A Subtle Temptation.

[TRENCH.]

If "the glory which excelleth" of that which we have in Christ is, that it is not shadow but substance, not anticipation but possession—not the idea, but the fact, or rather the fact and the idea in one, how are we letting go our most precious gains, when we at all let go, or when we even slight our historic faith, resting on and finding its object in the person of the Saviour! What a miserable exchange, to give up this, and to accept the largest, the most vaunted theories concerning

the godlike and the true in its room and as its adequate substitute, the most magnificent ideas in the place of the humblest affiance on the Son of God—soon to find that we have gotten pebbles for jewels, words for things—that we are in a world peopled only with ghosts and phantoms! O! loss unutterable, if we allow any to strip off for us the historic realisation of the truth in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, as though it were not of the essence of the matter, as though it were a thing indifferent, useful perhaps for the simpler members of the Church, but for others hindering rather than helping the contemplation of the pure idea, which they would persuade us is all that we need to retain. They promise, it is true, who invite to this sacrifice, that if we will destroy this temple of our historic faith, in three days, yea, in an instant, as by a magic wand, they will raise us up a goodlier and more gorgeous fabric in its room. Let it be our wisdom to give no credence to their words; knowing this, that it was the very blessedness which the coming of the Son of God in the flesh brought us, that it brought us that which

these would fain persuade us to relinquish and renounce, that it lifted men out of and above that condition into which these deceivers would willingly have them to return.

No doubt there is a temptation to give in to this, a temptation working in each one of us—to take up, that is, with a religion which shall consist in the contemplating of great and ennobling ideas, instead of in the serving with a straightforward and downright obedience a personal God. Those ideas, we feel that we can deal with them as we like; they exert no constraining power upon us; we are their masters, and not they ours; or if we have given them any rule over us, when the stress comes, we can withdraw it again—allowing them just as much authority as is convenient to us. There is no "Be thou holy, for I am holy" in them; no pointing to the rugged way of the cross, with a forerunner walking there, and a command that we also walk in it. Let us beware earnestly of so subtle a temptation, looking as it does so fair, and finding so much in our slothful and sinful hearts that makes them only too ready to embrace it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD.

Stamping the Cross upon our Lives.

[TRENCH.]

I SAY, brethren, with Christ's cross before us, shall we attempt to shrink from and to evade our own? In truth a hopeless endeavour! for he who will not *take* his share in the world's burden, who draws his shoulder from under it, does not really escape it. His share of that burden is laid upon him still. All that he has effected by his attempt to shun it, is to miss the blessing of it. He has sought to save his life, and so perhaps has lost it. For thus it is ever. "Care finds the careless out." In a moment it leaps within the defences which a man has ever so carefully reared; in a moment the enemy is within them; and all the thought and labour of a life to exclude him has

proved vain: and he whose labour it was that he might not have a crumpled rose-leaf under him, finds himself tossing suddenly upon a bed of thorns: and he who would not touch with his little finger his brethren's burdens, now finds his own laid heavily on himself. For even so does a righteous God evermore defeat men's plans of self-pleasing, and Himself lays upon them that, and often in far larger measure, which they would not *take* upon themselves. We have but this choice, to meet the toil and the task of life as manful combatants, or to be overtaken by them as cowardly fugitives. In one way or another they will inevitably be ours.

Therefore, for these and for all other reasons, looking at that cross of Christ, and seeing in it the gathering up of his whole life, the motto of it all, *that* to which all that went before was but as a long prelude, a *bearing* of the cross before He hung on it, let us dare to say to ourselves—In the power of that cross I will die to myself, to my own will and my own desires, in so far as they are mine, and not God's. It is an awful

word, when we say it in earnest, when we say it really meaning to carry it out, really meaning that it shall be the death-knell of our own self-will which has sounded—an awful word, and all that is in us of the old man will remonstrate against it, will plead that life is not worth the living upon such conditions as these. Yet if thou dare to say it and to act on it, thou shalt find it a blessed word, and the work which thereupon thou shalt undertake a blessed work. Out of this death presently shall come life, even thy true life, which was utterly cramped and hindered before; this seeming bondage shall be thy truest liberty; this, which seems utter straitness for thy spirit, shall anon bring thy feet into a large room.

And yet let us not suppose, brethren, that it will be enough to say once that we will thus die to self, and then that all will be accomplished, that the victory will be gained. Once indeed we must say it for the first time, and with the whole collected purpose of our will. Yet ever and again shall we find need to say it anew. For on every side we shall find the love of luxury, of ease, of

pleasure, in short, of the world, encroaching upon us, which ever and again will need to be arrested and put back. Hardly, and but with earnest prayer and after many a struggle, do we win a foot of ground here, and still more hardly do we keep that we have won. To stamp the cross upon our lives, and on all parts of them, this is no slight undertaking. What continual danger are we in of slipping out of this, of finding excuses for not attempting it; how ready is each one of us to smooth away all the rough corners and sharp edges of obedience, all that brings us in unpleasant contact and collision with the world or with our own desires—or to let that and these by their constant but unnoted friction smooth them away for us. And yet, if that cross means anything, if Christ hanging there was in any sense a pattern and example to us, all this in the power of his Spirit must be attempted, and must be done.

The Christian in the World.

[WHEWELL.]

In the first place, it is good for Christians themselves that they should not be taken out of the world. They must be there to exercise their Christian qualities—their faith, their love, their obedience. It may perhaps be said, that these are internal dispositions of the heart, which intercourse with the world cannot give, though it may impair them; that the wealth and honours, the friendships and rivalries, the public and private businesses of the world, can be of little or no concern to a man whose heart is set on heaven; that it is not what we *do*, but what we *are*, which determines our Christian condition; and that God can see into our hearts without needing that we should clothe our inward affections in the garb of worldly occupations and outward acts. But this is not really the teaching either of Scripture or of reason. We know that, in fact, all human affections require outward circumstances and conditions, not only for their manifestation, but for

their existence and development. All human virtues are virtues (so far as they can be so termed), by means of the external relations which call them into play. It is only by our conduct with regard to wealth, and honours, and friends, and rivals, and family, and neighbours, that we can show, and even that we can know, that we are willing and able to obey God's commands, and to conform our hearts to his will. The laws to which he requires our obedience, are laws which imply, at every step, those relations, and interests, and pursuits, which make up the business of the world; and the Christian is *truly* a Christian, not by shutting his eyes, and withholding his hand, and averting his heart, with respect to all the concerns of his household, and his neighbourhood, and his country; but by looking at, and dealing with, and feeling towards, all these things in a Christian spirit. It is easy for men to imagine that they have in their heart all Christian feelings, when they have not been tried; but if these dispositions will not bear the trial of external temptation, and opposition, and difficulty,

they are imaginary only, and not real. It is easy to say that not what we do, but what we are, is really of consequence, but how shall it be known *what* we *are*, except by that which, according to our external means and opportunities, we do? We may persuade ourselves that we have faith; but our faith is not genuine, except it work by love; and love is not Christian love, except it can live, and love, and work on through those clouds of indifference, and hatred, and jarring wishes, and opposing interests, which fill the atmosphere of the world. These clouds are the atmosphere of the world, but they are also the atmosphere in which the Christian spirit is tried. The world breeds them; the Christian temper dispels them, or at least parts them, makes its way through them like the sun, and turns them into attendant glories. It is not by withdrawing ourselves from the concerns of this life that we are to fit ourselves for another. We know that this course has been tried by many in past ages, and even in our own; but the course of experience does not teach us that God's blessing is upon it. The cloistered enthusiast, who

has secluded himself from the struggles and temptations of the world, broods over the movements of his own thoughts till they involve him in struggles and temptations far more unwholesome and dangerous; or, perhaps, he makes himself an external world on which to exercise his patience and fortitude, by surrounding himself with bodily pain and privation. But this is not the world in which God has placed him, or in which Christ has set him to walk. *He* prays that he may be taken out of the world; but Christ did not so pray for him. Let us rather seek how we may go through the world in the spirit of Christ's prayer for us:—in the spirit of the prayer which He has taught us, that He would lead us into no temptation which may overcome us, and so would keep us from the evil.

But perhaps it may be said, that in thus willingly involving ourselves in the struggles and temptations of the world, we show too great a dependence on our own strength; that this notion, of virtues which are to be brought out into view by exercising themselves upon the world's antagonist powers, is not in unison with Christian

humility; that it savours of presumption and self-confidence to wish to engage in the conflicts of the world, as if our Christian armour were of proof against all assailants; that those who remain in the world in such a spirit may, when it is too late, find that the foe is too strong for them; that such pride may, and commonly will, have a fatal fall. And indeed, if we were to think of remaining in the world in this temper of self-reliance, we might justly be blamed as rash and unwise. We should be helpless, like David in his armour; and we are then only likely to be victorious, when, like him, we put off this harness, and go forth in the name of the Lord God. But, then, this too is a lesson which we are most likely to learn by remaining in the world, and which we might remain ignorant of, if in any way we could be kept apart from the world. We are liable to fall away in time of temptation, as the band of disciples, and even the zealous Peter did; but, if the trial never come, we may be as confident in our love and zeal as they were before it came. But from the conflicts which an intercourse with

the world brings, we shall soon, if we really seek to overcome the world, learn *this* lesson—that the victory is not to be won by our own strength, and that it is only by a profound reliance on the help from on high, and by constant and humble petitions for the grace of God, that we can avoid shameful and fatal defeat. We know that Christ prayed for us, that, though not taken out of the world, we may be saved from the evil, and our trust that this may be so, and our hopes of it, must ever be kept alive, and led to their consummation by our prayers to Him; by our earnest petition that He will continue that loving care of *us*, his disciples, which He expressed to his first disciples on that memorable night; and that He will send to us that blessed Comforter whom He then promised. If we are in the world, with our thoughts, and hopes, and reliance fixed on Him who overcame the world, we may indeed share in the benefit of his prayer for us, that we may be kept from the evil. If we are in the world in this spirit, we may still feel the comfort of his words, and though in the *world* we have tribulation, we

may be of good cheer. If we are in the world in *this* spirit, we may, all the more on that account, abide in Christ as branches of the true vine, and bear such fruit as becomes his disciples.

And this fruit will not be for our own benefit only; but the world also will be benefited by those who are Christ's disciples remaining in it and labouring in it. This was the second general remark which we had to make—that a reason, as we must suppose, why Christ declared that He did not pray that his disciples might be taken out of the world was, that it is good *for the world* that they should remain in it. And indeed, so far is this good for the world, that if the power of Christ, working through the actions and ministrations of his servants, were taken out of the world, the whole frame of the world would be abandoned to evil—to sin and corruption, misery and despair. It is the Spirit of God, warring against the evil of the world, through Christ come in the flesh, and through his true servants actuated by his Spirit, which makes the world tolerable in God's eyes;—which gives meaning to its exist-

ence and continuance. To carry on that warfare with the spirit of the world which Christ himself carried on while He was on earth, is the great business of the Christian, is the great blessing of the world. When Christ returned to the Father from whom He came, He left his disciples behind Him to preach his faith to the world, and He prayed for them, and for all who should believe through their word. And in every generation we may believe that He continues to intercede for them in like manner; that He still prays for them and for all who shall believe through their word. And this is the business of Christians, at all times and in all situations—so to speak and so to act, that through their words and actions others may believe; so to carry into effect the petitions of Christ's prayer for them, that others may seek to share in the blessings which they enjoy; so to make known the benefits of their Christian brotherhood, that others may seek to be included in the same bands of love. Nor is this their task one without hope and progress. It is true, that in every age the world has opposed, and

hated, and persecuted, the true servants of Christ. It is true, that as it would not hear Christ's words, so neither will it hear the words of his ministers. It is true, that sin and evil, wrath and strife, greediness and coldness, sensuality and impurity, have resisted the efforts of Christian men to subdue and remove them. It is true, that the knowledge and the love of Christ, which alone can conquer these evils, make their way among men slowly and scantily. Yet still, something has been done. All has not been lost. The Lord has left us a small remnant, so that we have not been like unto Sodom and Gomorrah. Or rather, the boundary of evil has receded. The banner of Christ has advanced. The kingdoms of the earth have in a great degree acknowledged his name: in some measure—small, alas! yet still such as may save us from despair of God's blessing—they have received his Spirit. And thus the world has been so far benefited by the remaining in it of Christ's disciples, that *that* circumstance alone has enabled us to look upon it as God's world; that circumstance alone has enabled us to understand that

Christ has overcome the world; that circumstance alone can elevate and direct our thoughts to a final and more perfect stage of this victory, when all things shall be put under his feet.

With these views, we may then, I think, understand why it was that Christ thus prayed for his disciples, not that God would take them out of the world, but that He would keep them from the evil. But these views point at once to the practical conclusions which we are to draw from this text. For if we, as Christ's disciples, are to remain in the world for the exercise and discipline of our Christian dispositions, and, above all, for the practice of prayer to God and dependence upon Him, we must needs fashion our intercourse with the world very differently from those who seek in it their supreme enjoyments and their final aims. To us, it is not an end, but a means; not a home, but a school; not a resting-couch, but a battle-field; not a treasure-house, but a ship in which we make a perilous but necessary voyage. It is for us a scene of labour, and trial, and temptation; for if we engage in such tasks as the

common course of life brings before us, we shall be sure to have many temptations; so many, that knowing they will superabound, and knowing our own weakness, we may still seek to be spared all that are not absolutely needful for us; and thus may utter, in both senses, the prayer which Christ has taught us—that our Heavenly Father will deliver us *in* temptation, when it seems good to Him to send it, and will deliver us *from* temptation, so far as is consistent with our finding in the world a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; that He will, in both ways, fulfil Christ's prayer *for* us, and *ours* for ourselves, that we may be delivered from the evil; and thus may share in that other portion of this divine prayer of our Lord and Master (John xvii. 24): "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

On Decision in Religion.

[BISHOP HEBER.]

We cannot tell how often God may call us; but this we know, that even a single offer of grace, and help, and life without end, is more than we have any right to expect, since it is infinitely more than we deserve; and we know that it is a part not only of Christian duty, but of common prudence, humbly and thankfully to catch at the first offer of salvation which is made; to welcome Christ on his first visit, and not to let Him depart from our soul till He have left a blessing there.

Whether, then, we are called by the voice of the preacher, by the accidents of life, or by the secret whispers of conscience in our hearts; whichever of these natural means it be by which the inward grace of God have visited us, let us consider it as an appeal to our souls, of the same nature as that which Joshua made to his countrymen (Joshua xxiv. 15), and let us prepare ourselves to choose without delay, without partiality, whether we will be servants of God or no. "Choose ye

this day whom ye will serve." Servants ye must be to one or other leader—ye must serve a true or a false God; or if ye deny God altogether, yet ye will be no less, but tenfold more, the servants of your sinful lusts. Some one leading object of your thoughts and actions, some one pursuit of life there must needs be, on which your hopes, your cares, your labours are bent and fixed; and this object—whether it be Baal or Jehovah, wealth, or pleasure, or ambition, or anger, or pride—this object, which ye labour to gratify, and from the power of which ye hope for reward and happiness, what ye love above all things, desire above all things, serve above all things—this must be your God! If we honour any creature more than the Creator, it matters little whether that creature be a golden image, or a purse of money; whether it be the devil himself who presides over lust, or drunkenness, or covetousness, or those creatures of God which the devil tempts us to abuse. The sin is nearly the same; and the punishment can very slightly differ; and though in a Christian country mankind no longer

worship the sun and moon, or mutter their foolish prayers to stocks and stones, yet are the world and its joys still the object of the worldly man's desire and devotion; the option is still to be made by us all whether we will be servants of God or of mammon; and we are all of us called upon to choose this day whom we will worship, whom we will hereafter obey, and from whom we are to hope for our everlasting reward and portion.

Mankind, we cannot help observing, are divided into two great parties—the godly, or the followers of God; the worldly, or followers of the world and its prince; and it remains for us to consider to which side it is wisest and most advantageous to belong. On this question, however, a very little consideration is necessary to decide us, since no man whom I have ever met with, above the condition of an idiot, has been blind to the difference between the wages of sin and of righteousness; between the best reward which it is in the power of the world to offer, and the kingdom and crown of everlasting glory which is held out to the faithful and obedient soldier of Jesus Christ. I have

known many men who, with far more means of enjoying the world than myself, have taken their full range of its business, its pleasures, its hopes, and its cares, and I have never met with any who did not own that all these things very soon became tiresome, and at last insufferably nauseous. There is not one who has not confessed that the pursuits and pleasures of the world are vanity; and when we consider that these painted follies are to be purchased by the loss of our souls, that these short pleasures are to be succeeded by the pains of everlasting fire, it is loss of time to urge, what is evident to the common sense of all, that he who is wise will worship the Lord his God, and Him only will he serve.

The truth is, that, of the souls which perish, by far the greater number fall a sacrifice, not to any mistake as to the comparative value of this world and of the world to come, but to a vain and fruitless endeavour to get as much as they can of the first, without endangering the second. They are loth to fall into hell, and yet are they unwilling to

give up those pleasures, of which hell is the consequence: and they thus flatter themselves that they may serve God, though not in all things, at least sufficiently; that, if they are now followers of the world, they will yet, some time or other, renounce the world and its temptations; that there is no immediate danger or cause for hurry; and that God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiss. How foolish this manner of reasoning is, will appear to all from the following short statement of what that service is which is expected at our hands by God; what are those sacrifices by which we purchase to ourselves an interest in the blood of our Redeemer. To know this is highly necessary, since, if we embrace a profession, it is fit that we should know the duties which that profession imposes; if we go forth to warfare, it is wise to count the costs, and reckon up the dangers. And the service which the Lord of heaven and earth requires at our hands, may be shortly comprised in a single demand, the sacrifice of our heart and affections. "My son," are his words to all of us—"my son, give me thine

heart." (Proverbs xxiii. 26.) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first and great commandment." (Matthew xxii. 37, 38.) To love one who has done so much for us, to love the best of parents, the kindest of friends, our Creator, our Saviour, our Helper, this is surely no unreasonable service; but in this service more, far more, is implied than a cold or careless spirit may suppose. If we give up our whole heart to God, it must mean that we love nothing else in comparison with Him; that we desire nothing so much as to please Him, and to receive his approbation; and that we are ready, above all, to give up, when He requires, all that is dearest to us in this world, for his sake. This is often no light and easy service; and it is expressed by Christ in terms which show that it is one which requires our whole resolution, and which will be often accompanied with real pain and difficulty. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke ix. 23.) "Strait is the

gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life: and few there be that find it." (Matthew vii. 14.) "The kingdom of God is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew xiii. 45, 46.) "If any man come to me, and hate not," in comparison, "his father and mother"—"yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 26.) These greater sacrifices are not, indeed, often required; but they *may* be required at any time; and the only way by which we can know that such a heart is in us, as will in these greater matters resign itself to God's will, is by our readiness to please Him in such little things (if anything can be called little on which the salvation of a soul depends)—in such little things as are in our daily power. It is not the value of the service which we render to God (for our best services have no power to make him happier), but the good-will with which we do them; we are not required to do much, but to do our best; and many a poor, and weak, and ignorant

Christian will be crowned hereafter with unspeakable glory, who has never yet had it in his power to make any conspicuous or visible sacrifice. Instead, therefore, of boasting what we *would* do for God's sake if it were in our power, let us seriously consider what we *can* do; and take heed, especial heed, lest we neglect what little may be within our reach. And, to come to the behaviour of every one of us—if we neglect our prayers, or repeat them carelessly and without faith in God; if we are careless of our children's instruction, and do not correct them when they offend their Master and Maker and our own; if we take any undue advantage, how small soever, or neglect any little act of kindness, which may be in our power, God sees, and we ourselves may see from these examples, what is the real condition of our hearts; and that we, who have been thus "unfaithful in a few things," would have been far worse, had more been committed to our care. Let no man, therefore, be careless of his daily conduct, nor indulge in what are generally called little sins; since it is by our behaviour under such seemingly slight tempta-

tions as these, that our service to God is shown. It would be a strange answer of a servant to his master, were he to say, "It is true that I have been drunken and idle; but these are little things; and, if I am asked to rob your house, I never will consent to it." It would be stranger still, if, when commanded to go on a short and easy message, he should refuse so slight a duty; and yet, at the same time, offer to lay down his life for his master. "If ye will not do me so slight a favour," would doubtless be that master's reply, "how can I depend on you for greater services?"

Be not deceived; he that doeth righteousness is righteous; and he only, be the occasion small or great: ye cannot serve God and mammon; choose, while the choice is allowed you, which of them you will follow, and in the least as well as the greatest temptations, be this your constant answer, and, as far as your influence extends, let it be the answer of your children, your servants, and your friends, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Christian Courage and Consistency.

[BISHOP BLOMFIELD.]

MISERABLE is his weakness, who, knowing what his duty to God requires, abstains from doing it, not under the overpowering constraint of natural appetite, and the irresistible force of temptation, but from a sense of shame; from a self-condemned slavery to the opinions of a wicked world. Well would it be for us, if at the moment when a false delicacy, or a morbid fear of ridicule, exerts its influence, in opposition to the dictates of conscience and the plain commands of God, we could remember, with a sure conviction of its truth, that awful warning of the Lord, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

Let us, then, pray for a larger measure of spiritual courage and consistency. Let us dare to be uniformly and at all times Christian; in language, in demeanour, in charitable and edifying

conversation; desirous not only of securing our own salvation, but of setting forward the honour of Christ, and the growth of holiness in the world; as jealous for the credit of his Gospel, as though it depended wholly upon ourselves; and witnessing such a good confession before men, that the Redeemer may hereafter confess us before his Father which is in heaven.

Preparing for Temptation.

[BISHOP WORDSWORTH.]

WATCH and pray, therefore, my brethren, lest ye enter into temptation, lest it come upon you unawares, lest it find your eyes heavy, or your hearts overcharged with surfeiting and cares of this life. And as temptation is always at hand, even while we yet speak, with its sword and staff, so watch always, pray always. Live as it were in an attitude of prayer, and resignation, and dependence upon God. Possess your thoughts with a constant recollection that these things are for your trial, and with a just estimate of the momentous

consequences which depend upon the result. Reflect on the temptation as soon passed, the consequence to abide for ever; the lust, if gratified, as bringing forth death, if resisted, as laying up fruit unto everlasting life. This, then, is the first and most important preparation:—prayer and watchfulness—in continual dependence, not upon ourselves, but upon the grace of God. But prayer and watchfulness will be of little avail unless they are specially directed to your own particular wants and circumstances. And for this end, it is no less essential that you should be often at the pains to look into your soul—to examine your own heart—to discover what are its weak points—to ascertain the temptations to which it is most exposed, whether of insincerity, or of pride, or of sensuality, or of uncharitableness, in order that, having ascertained them, your prayers and watchfulness may be directed against them most especially. This I say is essential—that you should know that against which you have most need to watch, that for which you have most need to pray; in other words, that you should know something of

yourself—your own natural corruption, your own infirmity, your own inability to do anything that is good unaided by God's grace for which you pray, your own besetting sinfulness, the persons, places, and occasions which have led you into sin heretofore, in order that you may shun them for the time to come: otherwise, how can you be in earnest in preparing to meet temptation, if you omit to acquaint yourself with the quarter from which it is most likely to come upon you, and in which its attack will be most formidable? And, to fortify yourself the more in these precautions, it will be needful to understand well *why* you undertake them; to meditate often upon the nature and ends of the service itself on which you are engaged. Know, then, that the work of which we speak is no bye-work of your leisure hours, but the main work and business of your whole life. Know, too, that it is as difficult as it is great and glorious. It requires all your energies. No one who has really tried it ever found it too easy. No Christian hero, who knows the true nature and extent of God's kingdom within him

and without, ever wept for lack of new worlds to conquer and subdue. This is the proper field for your best powers; and here there is ample room, and scope more than sufficient, for their fullest exercise.

Another measure of preparation which I recommend, and which you will adopt, if you seek truly not to enter into temptation, is this: keep clear of everything that is like transgression; or, as the Apostle expresses it, "avoid all appearance of evil."—"In conversation be sincere; keep conscience as the noontide clear."—Hitherto, it may be, you have only dallied with temptation. You have never meant seriously to resist it when it came. You have gone, perhaps, to meet it half-way. You have allowed yourself in little acts of sin—if any act of sin can be called little—like Delilah playing with the hair of Samson, not knowing that in this lay all his strength. You have ventured, as near as you could, to forbidden things, like bathers upon the water's edge, dipping in first one foot, and then the other, till at length you have taken the fatal plunge. But, my bre-

thren, this is not to prepare for temptation in order to withstand it, but to welcome it, to woo it. Or, again, it may be you have taken upon yourself to make distinctions of what is evil. . . . And what is this but to prepare the way for your own fall, to throw yourself an easy and a ready prey into the Tempter's hands, who desires no better allies than such fond and frail antagonists?

Pressing Forward.

[WHEWELL.]

As far as the eye of reason can discern the space which lies before us in the field of moral advancement, while we look forwards we cannot help hearing a call to press forwards; we are continually urged by an inward prompting to summon our powers, and gird ourselves for the race. And when, before the light of revelation, the clouds have rolled away which bound the view of mere human reason—when the brief and dusky course, which at first we could alone discern, spreads onwards to an illimitable extent, far beyond the por-

tals of our terrestrial sojourn, through an interminable vista of celestial brightness — then, indeed, our hearts may well swell high, if we can hope that it is given to us to press forwards along that shining way. Nor, surely, shall we shrink back and turn away from the race set before us, so long as the gate is open, and promised aid to support our feebleness is nigh, even though there hang dark shades over the earlier portion of our path, and clouds and gloom, at times and for a season, intercept and eclipse the glorious light towards which we travel. The race that is set before us is, that we are constantly to strive to improve our spiritual being; to purify and elevate our hearts; to find, in the gracious dispensation of God, through Christ, pardon for our sins, and help for our infirmities; to seek more and more to be partakers in what He has done, in what He has won, in what He has suffered, in what He has promised; and thus, so to know and to do his will on earth, that we may constantly approach more and more to that condition of mind and soul in which we may be like Him, as we shall be

when we see Him as He is. This is the mark which is before us; this is our high calling. And such a call as this needs not to be enforced by arguments. That we *are* thus bound to raise and to cleanse our hearts, cannot be doubtful to us, if we feel that we have hearts which can be raised and cleansed. That we are to improve all our faculties, and dedicate them more and more to the service for which our Creator and Master ordained them, we cannot doubt, if we believe that we are his creatures, intended to do his will. That we ought ever to strive to go on towards perfection, must be plain to us, if we have ever looked towards perfection; for it is impossible to look in that direction without emotions of love and desire. The Christian ambition, which is ever aspiring at something higher than it has yet arrived at—which forgets the things which are behind, and reaches forth unto the things which are before—is a part of the nature of every man who has been awakened to the needs and powers of his own spirit. When we once see that there is such a mark; when we once hear the high call which

proclaims the race open to us, we know that the prize must be worthy of our best exertions; we know that any progress which we make will be its own reward, because it is a progress; we know that though we shall ever have to say, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," we must ever be ready to say also, with unhesitating resolution, "This one thing I do."

This Christian ambition, this effort to approach nearer to perfection, this straining after the things that are before, which is thus so congenial to a spirit awakened to a consciousness of its own value, and a hope of its permitted progress, it is for us, as the Apostle exhorts us, to foster and cherish, to unfold and extend. When this desire has taken full possession of the character, it will show itself in every part of our thoughts and actions, in every line of our occupations and pursuits. Its most important office is in our spiritual concerns; in urging us to a continual solicitude respecting the improvement of our religious condition; in impelling us to aim constantly to approach to the image of God in Christ. And it

is principally in order to impress upon you the duty of fostering such aspirations and such endeavours, that we have brought under your notice the Apostle's account of his habits of thought and action. But such habits, when fully established in the mind, will affect also, as we have said, our other employments, and ought to do so. The zeal, the hopefulness, the love of excellence, the suppression of self-complacency, the pleased contemplation of the idea of perfection, which draw on the Christian in every stage of his walk with God, may also most fitly and congenially govern his other pursuits; for which of these does not proceed from, and in its time affect, the faculties which God has given him? In his cultivation of his intellect, in his acquisition of knowledge, in his gratification of his love of excellence of all kinds; in his dealings with those around him, in his endeavours to remove their evils, and to influence them for good; in word and deed, in contemplation and in action, the true Christian will still be animated by such a spirit as may be described in words like those of the text—"For-

getting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he will press forwards towards the mark for the prize of his high calling."

Busy yet Devout.

[TAIT.]

I DOUBT not, we shall find that it is much more easy to preserve a deep spirit of piety in the midst of a life of active pursuit, however laborious and engrossing, than in a life of indolence. God never intended that we should pass our lives on earth without active exertion; and hence he who sets out in life with the intention of doing nothing will soon find that he is of all beings the most wretched. God has so made our minds that they cannot be happy without employment, and hence there is no dream more foolish, none from which men awake with a more painful sense of their folly, than that with which the young are apt at times to delude themselves, that happiness is to be found in leisure from all difficult employment.

It is not unnatural that this foolish thought should be cherished by those who are kept engaged, whether they will or no, in some active work for which they have no great interest. They look forward to being released from drudgery, and think that, when they have nothing to do, they will be happy. But a very little experience will soon convince them that, if they give up active habits, they have taken the sure road to make themselves miserable. God, when he created man, did not endow him with all his wonderful faculties of intellect and moral feeling, without intending that they should be called forth and vigorously exercised; and our Lord and Saviour did not leave heaven and die upon the cross to save those who are content to live the life of mere vegetables, as if they had nothing to do on earth but to subsist and die. To pass our lives in a course contrary to nature, even the heathen would have told us, is the sure way to be miserable; and it is the sure way also to be wicked. Difficult as it is, then, to serve God in the midst of business, it is much more difficult to serve Him in indolence.

Nay, further, it is not more difficult to serve Him in the midst of laborious business, than it is in a life of idleness. I draw a marked difference between indolence and idleness; and doubtless (if we may make any such distinction of degree between two states, both of which, however little men in general may be in the habit of regarding them in so serious a light, are in truth unchristian and hateful to God), indolence is the worse and more unchristian habit of the two. It is in itself the more wretched, and also it more incapacitates him whom it overpowers from any active exertion in Christ's service. The indolent man will do anything rather than exert himself to serious thought, and he who does not often think seriously, is no Christian. But most of us, I trust, are not, in this sense of the word, indolent. If we are, we are suffering under one of the worst diseases: it is a palsy that benumbs the whole soul. Most of us are busy enough in our own way. Men, and the young especially, cannot bear to do nothing. Hence, in maturer life, that madness which leads many, whose inte-

rests are not called forth by the duties of some manly and useful profession, to run the risk of sacrificing their whole fortune at some stake of hazard, rather than live without excitement. Men will rather ruin themselves than do nothing; and the same spirit of activity which God has implanted in us, leads in an innocent way to our engrossing and exciting sports; in which, throughout this country, strange to say, so many men, as well as boys, really labour as hard as if their daily bread depended on these exertions. What I say, then, is, that the idle who are not indolent, are in their own way as busy as the industrious, and, therefore, that we have the less reason to entertain any fear lest our active exertion in our worldly business should put our souls in unnecessary danger.

It is, however, granted fully, that to be at once not slothful in business, and yet fervent in spirit serving the Lord, is not easy. Every man who has entered on the duties of a laborious profession knows this by experience; and every one of the young knows it, who either here or elsewhere has

felt, as every better spirit must, a deep interest in the studies that become his age. Nay, without personal experience, every one who looks out on the state of society around him, sees this clearly proved. Consider for a moment what is the condition of the majority of men around us. Think of the agricultural labourer, who, winter and summer alike, is up with a rising sun, and exposed, in his declining years as well as in his youth, while labouring through each day, to all the vicissitudes of the seasons. Or think of the mechanic, who, pent up throughout the year within his crowded factory, never feels the invigorating influence of the joyous breath of spring. Or think of those who toil beneath the earth for our advantage, shut out in their labours even from that simple natural enjoyment which our bountiful God seems to have provided for all, in the grateful alternation of day and night, and the changes of the seasons. Every one who, in the duties of a parish or otherwise, has been brought into contact with these classes of men (and if we would have Christian sympathy for all our brethren, we should anxiously look out

for opportunities of being brought into contact with them)—every one must know, that, when the period of rest comes, they are so worn out with their labours, that, at first sight, it seems almost impossible for them to collect their thoughts and raise them up to heaven. It was from some feeling of the sad disadvantages to which such men were exposed, that there sprung the wretched tenet of a false heathen philosophy, that he who engaged in such employment was sunk below the level of human nature, and hardly worthy of the name of man. Such wretched statements as this, the Gospel which the Son of God came from heaven to preach to the poor has for ever silenced. Who knows not now, that in God's sight all men are equal? that the soul of the poorest and most oppressed labourer in the mines is of equal value, in God's sight, with that of the greatest of the earth's princes, or the wisest of its philosophers? Who knows not, also, that some of the brightest jewels of our Lord and Saviour's treasury have been found to be enclosed in that rough ore which the foolish heathen spurned from them as worth-

less? It would shake our whole belief in the goodness of God, if we could suppose that so vast a portion of the human race, as must it seems of necessity be always ground down by toil, were prevented by the position in which God has placed them from fulfilling their heavenly destiny. But there is really, we know by experience, nothing to prevent them from rising, in spite of all their difficulties, to a truly heavenly mind. Often the best Christians come from the very lowest of the lowly sons of toil; men from whom the highest may be proud to learn.

And here we return at once to our original statement. Truly to serve God and Christ while we are much occupied with earthly business, is indeed difficult, whatever be the state we live in: high or low, rich or poor, busy or idle, there is no man on earth who does not find it difficult to secure time for heaven; but to struggle with such difficulties is the very condition of our existence; and by the help of God's Holy Spirit, in this struggle there is nothing insurmountable.

Now let us consider, lastly, how such difficul-

ties are to be surmounted. As the words of the text stand before us, they are, "Not slothful in business, fervent in Spirit serving the Lord;" and whether this be an exact critical interpretation of the original or no, the truth they teach cannot be set aside. The only way to find time or opportunity, or even to have the inclination, to serve God, is from our gaining a fervent spirit. Thousands have tried at all times to evade the difficulty of which we have been speaking, by bringing down the requirements of God's Word to the level of their own practice. God, they think, will not be extreme to mark all their omissions: if therefore they do what they can, He will indulgently overlook all their failures. But this is really quite an unchristian way of speaking on such subjects.

God requires the heart: God requires a fervent spirit, zealous in Christ's service. While such words as those which our Lord used in the discourse with Nicodemus remain in the Bible, we must know that it is by passing into a new state of spiritual existence, not by a balancing of our

good deeds against our sins, and trusting generally to God's mercy, that we can be accepted. These words may, at first sight, seem to speak of deep and mysterious doctrines of Christianity; but our Lord in the same discourse has called them earthly things; thereby, as it would seem, intimating that they are the plain principles which must regulate man's conduct in his life on earth. But then comes the question, whence is this spiritual life to flow, without which our worldly calling, whatever it be, is sure to keep us from being Christ's faithful servants? We all know the answer—that it comes from God; but let us see that we do our part—that our hearts be waiting ready to receive it. One word more will be enough to teach us how this may be. If we would keep our hearts in a Christian state during our days of engrossing labour or engrossing sport, we must, whatever effort it may cost us, begin each day with serious private prayer. It is in vain to think that our spiritual life can be preserved if we adopt the habit of hurrying in the morning into all the excitement of the world's business or pleasure, with-

out having first held some private converse with our own hearts and God. He who loses this time for prayer in the morning, will not find it easy to recover it in the hurry of the day. Remember that you are really perilling your souls, every time you neglect to begin your day with some serious private prayer. Alas! for some of us, may we not fear that this peril is thoughtlessly encountered very often? Again, when night comes, there is more time for thought: there can be none of us who may not even without any great effort secure some quiet time in the evening for serious thoughts and prayer. There is none of us also who may not during the day find ample time for studying God's Word, if he please. The very business of our daily task brings it immediately before us. And I know no way by which our souls can possibly live, if we neglect to feed them thus regularly with supplies of food from heaven. The busiest day gives full time for such employments, if we are really anxious to find it; the least busy will pass without our gaining it, unless we are really earnest. One precept contains the whole

matter; he who lives in habits of prayer, sanctifies all his most worldly business—he who lives without some real serious prayer, lives without God; and to live without God, is to die eternally.

Exertion and Self-Denial.

[ARNOLD.]

THERE are some dispositions, which, from absolute indolence, seem to be zealous about nothing whatever; persons who appear neither to care about business or pleasure, who cannot be roused to take an active interest in anything. These are characters which exist, and which we must all have sometimes met with; but they are not common, neither are they very dangerous, because the general feeling of men is apt to despise them as stupid and insensible. A much more common case is that of persons who like some things exceedingly, and are all alive when they happen to be engaged in them, but who do not like their common employment, and display about that no interest at all. This is a very common case, for

it rarely happens that our employment is the very one which we should most choose, or the one which we most choose at this particular time, or under these particular circumstances. And yet, if it be not, even although we may not dislike it in itself, we may dislike it in comparison with what we like better; and this, for all the purposes of destroying our interest in it, is nearly the same thing as if we disliked it in itself. For instance, we all know that the expectation of any great pleasure is apt to unsettle our minds; although our work may commonly interest us tolerably, yet now, with this prospect before us, it seems dull and tiresome; we regard it merely as a burden, and grudge every hour that we give to it. So, then, it seems that we must all expect to have our work often disagreeable to us, and that in many cases it is always disagreeable—disagreeable, I mean, by nature, and speaking according to common notions. But to say that a man can do heartily what is disagreeable to him, is to talk of impossibilities; he can no more do it than he can have an appetite for nauseous food; he will attend

to what he dislikes no more than he can help; and so far from following it up so earnestly as to allow himself no leisure so much as to eat, he will be glad of every excuse, and enlarge as much as possible upon the claims of his health, his strength, and his reasonable liberty, in order to abridge to the utmost the time which he cannot altogether refuse, to what he knows to be the call of duty.

It may be said, then, that I have given the idle all the excuse they can desire; for I say that no one *can* do heartily what is disagreeable to him, and they will maintain very truly that their daily employment *is* disagreeable to them. I know that it is so, but it does not follow that it must always *remain so*. True it is, that we cannot do heartily what we dislike; but it is no less true, that we may learn if we will to like many things which we at present dislike; and the real guilt of idleness consists in its refusal to go through this discipline. I might speak of the well-known force of habit, in reconciling us to what is most unwelcome to us; that by mere perseverance what was at first very hard, becomes first a little less so,

then much less so, and at last so easy, that, according to a well-known law of our faculties, it becomes a pleasure to them to do it. But although perseverance will certainly do this, yet what is to make us so persevering? If we go through this discipline it will cure us, but what can engage us to give it a fair trial? And here it is that I would bring in the power of Christ's example; here it is that the grace of God through Christ will give us the victory. "Christ pleased not Himself;" "Christ allowed Himself no leisure so much as to eat." For what did He do this, and for whom? For our salvation, and for our spirits' sakes, that we through his poverty might be made rich. And who was He who so denied Himself? The Son of God, the heir of all things; even He by whom all things were created, and by whose providence they are sustained. Yet He would not allow himself fully to use them, but thought it his meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish his work. And who are we who do not deny ourselves? His creatures, who owe everything to his goodness, and yet day by day

are unworthy of it; his creatures, who, with no right to so much as the crumbs under his table, think it hard if we cannot sit down, and rest, and enjoy, under circumstances in which He never rested; his creatures, who, offending him every hour, are yet impatient of anything but pleasure at his hands—who, with so much of that guilt for which He was pleased to be crucified, are yet unwilling to submit to that discipline which his pure and spotless soul endured cheerfully, for no need of his own, but for our sakes.

Alas! this touches us all, young and old alike: we may not well find fault with others in this matter; but we may and must speak of it to them as their heinous sin against God, from which would to God that we were any of us wholly clear! Indeed, my brethren, we too early gain, we too fondly cling to the notion, that we come into this world to seek our happiness in it. Too large a proportion of our fellow-creatures are cured of this error by necessity; there are too many who are taught by early and excessive labour, and by greater suffering than ever self-

denial would impose upon them, that this world is for them at least no place of enjoyment. Their over-labour doubly shames our over-indulgence. But the truth which they cannot but learn, we must learn also, or we perish for ever. If we make this life what Christ will not have it be; if where we should labour we presume to rest, where we should deny ourselves, we revel in enjoyment, we at once wrong our poorer brethren and insult Christ; we laugh, in fact, at his view of human life, at his constant exertion, and his self-denial; we think that we judge more wisely in pleasing ourselves, and snatching our joys while we may. If we are right, then indeed his example was needless; but if that example were given as our pattern—if as He was, so should we be in this world—if He himself was made perfect through suffering, and entered not into glory without first suffering pain—what will become of us, if unpurified and unsanctified, with no labour of love done, with all Christ's labour and sufferings despised as thankless, we offer ourselves for entrance into that eternal kingdom where none but his redeemed can enter?

What will become of us, if, enjoying when we should be labouring, and thinking of our pleasure instead of doing his will, we were to hear his summons at the door? Would He, will He, find us watching when He calls—faithful stewards of his gifts, each in our several station doing the work of his house, with loins girded about and lamps burning? Blessed be our portion if He does; but if otherwise—if eating and drinking, injuring our fellow-servants, and despising Him—we know what will be our portion; we know that we shall call on the rocks to fall on us, rather than meet his presence then.

The Strife.

[ARNOLD.]

EASY, most easy, is it to admire and love what is beautiful, and wise, and pure, and holy; nay, it is even unnatural and monstrous not to admire it. But there is something more wanted than this, before we shall copy as well as admire; and in this is the great point of all. It is not enough

that we love the character of Christ: who can help loving it? It must be something of a closer and more personal feeling, if I may so speak, that will make Him become to us the bread of life; and this feeling will only be gained by prayer. By prayer we speak to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we speak to Him as needing his help and mercy. By prayer we express our sense of the reality of what we have read in the Scriptures; we say, in fact, "Give to me, Lord, my own particular portion in the blessings which the Scripture speaks of. I love what I read of Christ; but I am so unlike Him, that He cannot love me. I love his character; but other feelings often come in much stronger than this love, so that I cannot be said to live in the love of Him. What I want, Thou, Lord, seest, and Thou wilt give it me also; for though I have, as yet, no personal experience in these matters, yet I know that the Scripture says we shall be heard if we pray to Thee, and that Thou wilt give Thy Holy Spirit to them that ask it." It is an awful moment, a turning-point often in our character for all

eternity, when we first begin, in some such manner as this, to enter into a real communion with God; when our prayers first become—I do not say sincere, for I should be very sorry to think that they had not been, in many cases, sincere, even from earliest childhood—but when they first proceed out of an awakened heart which feels more deeply what itself is, and what is God. It is astonishing how this sort of earnest prayer opens our eyes daily more and more, and strengthens our faith. A natural part of such prayer is confession: we cannot but truly feel our unworthiness when we bring the most high and holy God present, in a manner, before us. We know then—we cannot help knowing—that we are naked. This calls up before our minds our particular and besetting sins; those disguises of our real character, which self-love is so apt to throw over it, are all torn to pieces then; we see ourselves nearly in the same light as a fair enemy would see us. And this alone, what a mighty point is it to gain! How many of us (and this is the truer in proportion as we are younger) are kept from day to day,

without ever seeing ourselves truly as we are! We think of our faults, only to deny or to excuse them; we dwell with pleasure on our good points, and the rest we are glad to pass over. But in prayer, and when kneeling, really with a sincere heart, before Him to whom all hearts are open, his Spirit, if I may so speak, becomes our own: and we are all open and manifest before our own eyes, as before his. Then we turn to Him to save us from this evil which we have discovered: "Lord, forgive me; Lord, help me to strive against my selfishness, my indolence, my pride, my unkindness, my carelessness, my love of pleasure, my lust, my covetousness, my ungodliness!"

Each soul who now hears me,* if he could but put himself for an instant into this state when he is sincerely praying, could tell at once—his heart, whilst I have been naming these several sins, would answer at once to the touch of that or those particular ones to which he is himself in bondage, "Lord, help me to strive against it; for Jesus

* Delivered at Rugby.

Christ's sake, save me from it!" They are but a few words; but how wholesome to the soul when said, as they are said in such prayer, with earnest sincerity! Our attention is drawn just to those very parts in ourselves which most need it: at every prayer the attention is renewed. We cannot help thinking, when we ask God in the evening to strengthen us against such and such a sin, whether we have committed it since we uttered the same prayer in the morning. If we have not, we are encouraged; if we have, we are justly ashamed; and our prayer is the more earnest, that the next day we may be more watchful. Say that we fall again (for infinite is our frailty), that our sense of shame is deeper, our fear for the future just so great as to give the enemy of our souls an opportunity of turning it into desperate carelessness: "It is a vain labour to try to mend." Then our familiarity with the Scripture comes in time to tell us, "that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins;" and to encourage us to renewed efforts by assuring us,

"that he who cometh to Christ, Christ will in no wise cast out."

The same knowledge of the Scripture brings rapidly before our mind all the promises which we most need. It reminds us that we must be earnest in prayer, and not faint; that the kingdom of God is like the seed, which grew up in its appointed season, though it showed no signs of life at once; that he who shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. All these, and many other such texts, we now lay hold of with a personal interest. We now feel their value. The words of Christ, in this our daily struggle with our sins, are now, indeed, becoming to us our bread of life. While I repeat the words, those who have attended to what I have been saying will feel their true import; they will feel that, in such circumstances, they would go to Christ's life and words, and find in them a real effectual support to their souls, just as they have found the cheering and strengthening effect of food to their bodies, when engaged in any great and fatiguing exercise of body or mind — that, amidst these prayers, thus repeated, a

wonderful change is effected within us; that our dispositions are greatly softened and sweetened; that our views of life and death become different; our interest in earthly things less engrossing; our selfishness generally less intense: all this is a matter of actual experience, of most blessed experience to those who can confirm it from within themselves; but of recorded experience also in the lives of Christians, such as we may either have known them ourselves, or may have read of them. And that this change, so real and so visible, is the work of the Holy Spirit of God—of the manner of which we can see and know nothing, but whose effects both we and all the world can witness—this we learn from the Scriptures; and it forms one of the great and most consoling truths of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Unquestionably, where this change is wrought, faith overcometh the world. The good things which God has prepared for them that love Him; his love to us in Christ Jesus; the abiding influence of his Spirit—all these are things which our prayers have made quite familiar, not to our ears only,

but also to our hearts: they are things which have become the great interest of our lives, and we live in the daily consciousness of their reality.

But what if these blessed effects do not follow; what if our faith is still weak, and the world is not overcome; that is, if the temptations of the world are still too much for us, and earthly hopes, and fears, and affections, still reign within our bosoms with far greater sway than the love of God — what shall we say to this? Is God's promise not sure? Is our labour all in vain? Or is it an empty dream that the Holy Spirit of God will ever deign to abide with the corrupt spirit of man? Shall we be careless or desperate, or rush to that most deadly snare of all, and say that we are fated to be as we are, and we cannot help it? All these are questions which arise from not enough bracing our minds to the belief of this great truth, that our struggle with evil must last to the very latest hour of our continuance in the body. Who told us that our victory would be won with less than half a life's labour; that our first efforts would be successful; and that we

should be partakers of the rest that remaineth for the people of God, ere yet the sun had begun to slope from his meridian, ere the first shades of evening had arisen around us? We must learn another and a harder lesson, or else, indeed, we shall lose the victory for ever. Is our faith still weak? Let us take heed that our prayers have not been less frequent or less zealous. Is the world still too much for us? Let us take heed that we have not thrown away some portion of our defence; that we have not been imprudent, to say the least of it; that we have not used the world even so as to abuse it; that we have not let the weeds and the thorns of earthly riches, pleasures, and honours, grow too unchecked and rankly. Let us measure our years, if we are young or in the vigour of manhood, at once for encouragement and for warning: if we see how little progress we have hitherto made, let us take heed lest we should feel the same when all our threescore years and ten are over; for the despair that would be most sinful now, will be too just and too certain then. And let us know, that if we indulge the spirit

of carelessness now, this despair will come—our years will pass away unnoted, till gone for ever. But if our hearts are only unreasonably fearful, if we expected to conquer sin with too little effort, think of the portion of our lives that yet remains, think to what precious purposes it may be applied, and that he were but a foolish and fainthearted traveller who expected to reach the end of his journey before half his day was over.

On a Correct Appreciation of the Value of our Sphere of Labour.

[ARNOLD.]

FOR ourselves and for our children, life is before us as a trial-time of uncertain length, but short at the longest, in which we may fit ourselves, if we will, for an eternal life beyond it. This is life to each of us, and this is our proper business; all the rest that we do, or can do, however splendid, however useful, is, or should be, done only subordinately. We may be thankful to God when He makes our training for eternity consist

in the doing great and useful actions, in bringing forth much fruit; but we, each of us, are doing our business as thoroughly, are answering as completely the purposes for which *we* were sent into the world, if we are laid for years of our life upon a bed of sickness, incapable of any further action than that of glorifying God, and perfecting our own souls, by patient love. The welfare of nations, the improvement of the world on a large scale, are, if I may use such an expression, God's object and God's business; and thankful and happy we may be when, by the particular call of his providence, he chooses us to be his honoured instruments in accomplishing his work. But yet we should rejoice with trembling, lest, while thus engaged in what I have ventured to call God's peculiar work, we may chance to neglect our own; while preaching or ministering to, or enlightening or governing others, we ourselves should be castaways. It is not, therefore, true that our great business or object in the world is to do all the good we can in it: our great business and object is to do God's will, and so to be changed through his Spirit into

his image, that we may be fit to live with Him for ever. His will is declared to us by the course of his providence, putting us into different situations of life where different duties are required of us; but these duties are duties because they are his will; and if performed without reference to Him, if done for worldly objects only, be they ever so extensive and beneficial, if done solely to improve mankind, and not to do the will of our Heavenly Father, then our great business in life is left undone, and the most helpless sufferer who has been bedridden for years, or the child who has been called away after the first opening of its heart to the love of God, has spent life better, and better answered the end for which he was born, than we.

And it is manifest, that to keep this end steadily in view, is a wonderful means of ridding life of its carefulness. If to be useful in our generation simply be our main object, our happiness cannot but greatly depend upon outward circumstances. Our own weakened health, the failure of our faculties, the decay of our worldly prosperity, the state of other men's minds, and the condition of public

affairs, may at any time cripple our usefulness, and defeat our object at the very moment when we thought ourselves sure of obtaining it. And the prospect of death, in the vigour of his years, to a man engaged in some long and important work, which he feels would be useful to mankind if he could accomplish it, is one of the severest trials to him, if he does not remember what his real business in life is, and when he may feel that it is accomplished. Most painful would it be to be taken away from the harvest when his hand was just upon the sickle, if he did not think who was the Lord of that harvest, and to whom it belonged to find the reapers for it. But when we do think of all this, and recollect what is indeed our real business here, we cast at once all our care upon God, and resign ourselves contentedly to his disposal. Then we can never feel to die prematurely, never think that our labour has been in vain in the Lord, how little soever may be the earthly fruit of it. Contented to live, and thankful to die, happy in having been the instrument of good, satisfied in the failure of his efforts that

his work has yet not been thrown away, as far as concerns his main object, such a man is indeed taking life rightly, and all its changes, be they what they may, are to him working together for good.

Now, it is with reference to this view of life especially that Christ's particular employment, the mixing with others, not for business or for pleasure, but to do them good, is so exceedingly useful. In direct personal intercourse with our neighbours, when this is borne in mind, every day's work is complete in itself, every day secures actions for comfortable memory here, and for a blessed account hereafter. Here, in truth, we may feel that the word is very nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, that we may do it. It is surprising how much pleasure may thus be given every day, how much suffering relieved, and how much good done. Unlike the more laborious enterprises of human life, where the previous time and exertion is often almost wasted, if we are by any circumstance hindered from completing them, in these daily charities, the seed is no sooner sown than

the harvest is gathered, and the fruit stored away in security. In such a course of life, sufficient for the day is the good thereof, no less than the evil.

But now, it may be asked, how can we secure such a life? We are engaged in various worldly occupations, which are undoubtedly our immediate and most particular duties, which take up the greatest portion of our time, and oblige us many times to provide for the future, to live for much more than for the day. I said, in my former sermon, that we cannot, indeed, imitate Christ exactly in this point, but that we must find opportunity to do sometimes what He did always. The opportunities, of course, will vary greatly: and while, in some situations, like that of a clergyman with the care of a parish, Christ's employment may actually be ours, and our main business is just the same as his was, yet in other professions and situations of life it is not so; and the opportunities for following his example must be carefully treasured up whenever they do occur, and multiplied by our own watchfulness. But,

in whatever station or employment, we must find them or make them, if we would not deprive ourselves of what may well be called the salt of our daily living. We must, if we would keep ourselves unspotted from the world, acquaint ourselves with the dwellings of the poor. I do not say that we are all of us, and especially the very young, to go to them always with spiritual addresses: all are not fitted to give medicine for the soul, any more than medicine for the body; and, to say nothing of the great disorder and irregularity of every man taking up the minister's part, there are a great many who would not at all know how to do it. But good may be done both to mind and body, and infinite good done to our own souls, without interfering either with the duty of the minister, or with that of the physician. To ourselves, it is a great benefit to learn really what poverty is, to see how it is borne, and to think, as we must think, how hard we should find it ourselves to bear it. To the poor, on the other hand, nothing is more welcome, nothing more soothing, than the mere proof of our interest in

them, and Christian regard to them. We need not go with alms always, and it is far better that we should not; but out of mere friendliness, to vary the sameness of a life which has far less of variety and amusement than our own, to listen to their stories, to open their hearts to kindness, when the hardships of life may have well-nigh utterly hardened them. Nor do I say that even this could be done generally with propriety by young boys here;* but, at the same time, there is no boy so young as not to be concerned in what I have been saying; for, if not here, there is scarcely one of you who might not begin the practice of becoming acquainted with the poor under the care of your friends at home; and of thus learning, when here, to leave off every kind of wrong or insult to them, such as you know are sometimes committed. And certainly, as I said before, those among you of more age and experience might do more; and, without stepping in the slightest degree beyond what is proper and becoming, you might find op-

* Delivered at Rugby.

portunities, even here, of doing in this manner much good to others, and much, very much more, to yourselves.

But God does more for us even than this. He enables us, if we choose, to make a great deal even of our common intercourse with others—an imitation of Christ's life, and an improvement to our souls. And here, at least, we all have our opportunities, unless we choose to neglect them. Even at the marriage feast at Cana, even at supper in the Pharisee's house, or when talking with the woman of Samaria, who came to draw water at Jacob's well, did Jesus glorify his Heavenly Father. So, too, may we glorify Him, not only in our visits to the poor, but in our intercourse with those of our own station; not only in more solemn occasions, but in our business, and in our intercourse of common civility. At school, in your common dealings with one another, how much rudeness and unkindness, and encouragement of evil and discouragement of good, would instantly be done away, if as Christ was, so were you in this world! How much happiness would be occasioned, where

there is now, perhaps, only uncomfortableness; how many silent lessons of good would be conveyed, where evil is now taught so carelessly! And, in later life no less, how much proud or angry excitement, how much mortified feeling, or encouraged vice or folly, would be softened, and soothed, and chastened down, if we mixed with each other, in the common course of life, with something of the Spirit of Christ! As things now are, not only business but pleasure itself is often a weariness: we cannot take part in either without the tone of our minds being too often either hardened or irritated; the peace of the Spirit is not with us when the work of the day is over. It is useless, and not altogether true, to say, that the fault of this is in others: others may be faulty, and doubtless are so; but how little would their faults affect us, if they were met by nothing bad within our own bosoms! For even supposing our charity to be ever so lively, if we felt even as Christ felt for the evil of others, and for the ruin which they were bringing on themselves by it, and if we were wearied by it as He was, when He

cried, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?"—yet still, this sorrow and this weariness are not inconsistent with that peace of the Spirit which Christ gives, and which He himself declared to be far different from that which "the world giveth." It would be a sorrow and a weariness that would rather turn us more heartily to God, than a restlessness which makes us shrink from Him. It would only make us long the more for that rest that remaineth for the people of God, and not drive us back to wander after our own ways in this world's wilderness.

Such, then, is Christ's daily lesson to us: not to be idle or slothful in our work; and to sanctify it by doing it as to Him, and not as to man. Not to be idle, as those who have mere bodily faculties, who live only to eat, and drink, and sleep; not to be too busily and carefully engaged in our own labour, and still less for its own sake, as those who lived only for themselves, and for this world, and to whom God, and Christ, and eternal life, had never been made known. Let us work ear-

nestly—for so did Christ; but let us work also as doing God's will, and for the improvement of our own souls, or else our work will not be such as He will acknowledge at his coming.

The Lesson of Scripture in Common Duties and Common Means.

[TRENCH.]

. . . WITHOUT question, for ourselves, brethren, the lessons which the Scripture contemplated as this book of an ever-advancing education may suggest, are not very far to seek. And this first. God has taken our whole race by the hand, that He may lead it on together; even so will He lead every single soul that will trust itself to Him. He will speak to us first as little children, then as young men, and then as fathers; his Word in our hearts shall be as the blade, and the ear, and the full corn in the ear. He will give us, as we are faithful, an ever larger horizon, a widening horizon of duty, with an increasing consciousness of powers and faculties for fulfilling that duty.

And our second lesson lies also at the door—that seeing, as we do in Scripture, what the school has been in which all God's saints have been trained, we be well content to learn in the same, nor count that we can learn better in any other. The study of Scripture shows us how, through the everlasting ordinances of the Family, the State, the Church, God trains into nobleness and freedom the souls and spirits of men; how He calls out in their strength first the affections, then the conscience, and last of all the reason and the will of men. It teaches us how, not in self-willed separation from common duties, but in a lowly and earnest fulfilling of them, men have grown up to their full stature as men. Often in that evil pride which makes us rather to follow after that which will divide us from our brethren, than that which will unite us to them, we have counted, it may be, that we could discipline ourselves better, that we could train ourselves higher, than by those common ways in which all our fellows are being trained, better than through the ordinances of the family, better than through the

duties which devolve on us as citizens, better than by the teaching and sacraments of Christ's Church. It has seemed to us a poor thing to walk in those trite and common paths wherein all are walking. Yet these common paths are the paths in which blessing travels, are the ways in which God is met. Welcoming and fulfilling the lowliest duties which meet us there, we shall often be surprised to find that we have unawares been welcoming and entertaining angels; and nurturing ourselves upon these, it shall be with us in our souls, as with Daniel and his young companions, when they showed fairer and better liking, and throve more upon their common food, their ordinary pulse, than did all their compeers upon their royal dainties, their profane meats, brought from the table of the Babylonian king.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON DISCIPLINE AND TROUBLES.

Reverses.

[VAUGHAN.]

"So the last shall be first, and the first last."—MATT. xx. 16.

LET this word of Christ's sink deep into our hearts. It tells us that great changes are always to be expected in the comparative order of men: he who is now first may one day be last; he who is now last may hereafter be first: it is not the law of God's providence only, that reverses should be witnessed in men's positions and fortunes in this life; but the same thing is true also even in a deeper and more awful sense: one man passes another in the race of eternal life, and he who wins not in that race becomes a castaway.

As applied to the life that now is, no one can look around him without seeing examples of the

truth here stated. Of two men starting with equal advantages, possessed of equal abilities, using (it may be) equal diligence, one succeeds in life, and the other fails: or one succeeds for a time marvellously, leaving the other immeasurably behind him; and then from some unsuspected quarter misfortune assails him; the race is no longer to the swift, nor the battle to the strong—the first has become the last, and the last first.

We see it no less in intellectual things. How many cases have we all known here,* in which, with the greatest natural advantages—a quickness of comprehension, and a readiness of attention, and a power of memory, that seemed to make it not only possible, but easy, to effect anything—a boy has yet suffered himself to be outstripped in the long run by those to whom comparatively nothing had been given, but everything had to be gained by laborious efforts! How often have we seen, even here, even in this sense, the last first, and the first last! It is just and right that this

* Delivered at Harrow.

should be so; that from him who "hath not"—that is, who uses not nor improves the powers which God has given him—should be taken away by degrees even that he hath; that he should learn by his own experience the folly and the weakness of presumptuous self-confidence, the wisdom, even for this world, of persevering humility.

But it is only in the way of illustration, that I would thus for a moment lower the solemn meaning of the text. If the worst that could happen to any of us were worldly disappointment; if the only danger before us were that of seeing others, of less natural endowments than ourselves, rising while we fell, winning where we lost, in the race of earthly life, it might, indeed, be our prudence, our interest, so to run as that we might obtain—to beware of sinking from the first place to the lowest in the ranks of our generation; but it would be no fit subject for this place, in which we meet rather to learn to forget this world than to be excited to zeal in its competitions. Let us return, therefore, to that application of the words before us which was designed by Him who uttered

them. It is true, our Lord says, in the greatest matter of all, in reference to the final condition of the soul of man, that the last shall in many cases be first, and the first last.

"A certain man" (it is written in another place) "had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not."

"The last shall be first." There are those who, when God's call first reaches them — his call to do work for Him—refuse Him that speaketh. They answer and say, "I will not." It is the case with many amongst us. From our childhood we have heard and read God's message; it is written in our Bibles, it is preached in our churches; it is a plain message, an urgent message—in reality, a most kind message; it tells us indeed of our sins, it warns us of a coming judgment, but it is only that it may add to all such disclosures the revelation also of deliverance, and

make known to us One who saves from sin—saves to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. But all this is not enough to secure its acceptance. In some cases, it is long before the message reaches us correctly. Those who should deliver it are unfaithful. Parents fail to deliver it, or deliver it coldly, formally, inconsistently. Meanwhile, there is another teacher who is *not* idle. The negligence of others only helps and stimulates his work. In one form or another, the tempter soon comes to us, and the house which is empty is already garnished for his reception. The Holy Spirit is not there, and therefore the strong man armed may enter and keep his palace. Nor is it only for want of early or of faithful instruction, that this comes to pass. There is a bias in every heart towards evil, which resists the call of God. There may be much that is amiable, much that is admirable, in the natural character; but its bent is wrong; it is not towards God, but from Him. Only his grace can correct this. He who speaks without must speak within also, if his voice is to be heard inwardly. And not only

in conscience—not only in the silent reproof or approbation which follows each act, and word, and thought, witnessing for truth, and right, and holiness, making it impossible to plead utter ignorance of sin and of duty, and so leaving the sinner without excuse—not only thus; this is not enough to secure obedience, though it be enough to justify God when He judges. It needs more than the mere strivings, or reproofs, or admonitions of the Holy Ghost through the conscience, to bring man to God, and to set him heartily to work in his service. The will, the affections, the heart, no less than the understanding and the conscience, must be taken possession of and occupied by God, or they will all become the habitations of evil, beyond all possibility of disturbance from without. And this possession of the heart by God, though it is promised to all who desire it, is desired but by few. It is long before its absolute necessity is forced upon us. It is long before we find ourselves to be really what God tells us we are—miserable and helpless, perishing in our own corruption. And therefore we seek not, or seek

faintly, that only help which comes from Him. In the race of life eternal we remain amongst the last: nay, we can scarcely be said to have yet started. Or, to take the other figure, God comes and says to us, "Son, go work for thy day in my vineyard;" and we answer, "I will not."

Is it of such as these that the words are written, "The last shall be first?" In part, at least, it is. There have been those in whom its truth has thus been exemplified. There have been those who, after refusing God's call, have humbled themselves to it. At the third or at the sixth hour they have set to work in that vineyard which at daybreak they had refused to enter. Then, in the zeal of devoted gratitude, they have put to shame the feebler energy of some who from their youth had served God. The last have become first.

. . . .

But are there now amongst us to-day any to whom this description is applicable—that they are at present among the last in God's service? any, that is, whose hearts tell them that they are not by their own will and choice his servants at

all? any who, knowing, as you all know it, what God requires of you—knowing what is right and what is wrong—knowing how you must act in order to please God—knowing that what you cannot do for yourselves, owing to the sinfulness of your own hearts, Christ by his Spirit can enable you to do, and bids you come to Him, that He may do it for you—are yet living at a distance from Him; preferring your sins, or at least your thoughtless security, to what you choose to regard as an irksome and gloomy bondage? any whose hearts witness against them that, neither to-day, nor yesterday, did they begin the day by earnestly seeking God's strength, nor pursue it in the recollection of Him; but that they have lived at random, as chance or impulse might direct—doing right by accident where they did right at all, and at least as often thinking, and saying, and doing wrong? It is quite plain, if this be our state, that we have not yet entered God's vineyard; that we are not yet doing his work, nor in the way consequently to his reward.

Christian Discipline.

[HAMPDEN.]

. . . THIS, then, is the simple instruction resulting from the beautiful passage of Scripture in 1 Cor. ix. 24–27. We are taught that, whilst an incorruptible crown has been secured for the Christian by labours and sufferings not his own, even by Him who wrestled with the powers of darkness and overcame them, yet labours and sufferings are the probation through which the Christian must pass to his crown of glory; that whilst his Saviour has offered for him that one only sacrifice which gives him the final victory in all his conflicts with the world, yet sacrifices on his part are also required; he must also suffer with Christ, if he would in the end conquer and reign with Christ.

The illustration conveyed in the text brings the whole Christian life before us as a *discipline*—as a training of the character at once by a course of strenuous exertion and of rigorous self-command—as a constant series of efforts, stimulated by the

greatness and certainty of the reward set before us, and controlled and chastened by a humble anxious fear, lest we should in the end, on the day of our trial, be found unworthy of the prize to which we have aspired.

. . . . . .

The candidate for the Isthmian crown did indeed afflict and punish his body; he did enforce on himself a rigorous abstemiousness; he did make a sacrifice of himself, of every feeling of his nature, to the one engrossing thought of the prize of honour which he had in view. But these are not the points of imitation to which the apostle's instruction, as arising out of his own example of devoted zeal for the Gospel, refers. The competitor for an earthly crown, for the reward of deeds of the body, would naturally train and discipline the body, would nerve and brace it, by temperance and hardy exercises, to the utmost perfection of its powers of endurance and daring. But the aspirant to a heavenly crown is disciplining, in fact, not the *body*, but the *soul*. His body may be bent with infirmity and disease, may

be utterly incapable of enduring abstinences and hardships which others submit to with comparative ease: but his soul at the same time may be in far more vigorous training for the prize of its own high calling.

. . . .

You know that the name of *Religion* became, in process of time, attached to the profession of the monastic life, in contradistinction to the popular Christianity which mingled in society. And this fact sufficiently marks the tendency of asceticism to appropriate to itself all that is holy—to substitute, in fact, a sanctity of man's device and man's working for the righteousness of God in Christ. Let a person, indeed, once resolutely set foot on the thorny and intricate path of the ascetic, and the flattery of the world and of his own heart will soon smooth it to him, if not strew it with roses. The difficulty is at the outset, when the ground is as yet untrodden, when the heart is yet to be steeled to a stern enthusiasm from which it instinctively recoils. But as he proceeds, the praises of men encourage him on, his heart begins to see

its own holiness—*its imaginary holiness*—reflected in the admiration of others: and experience has shown that an inward self-righteousness may creep over and benumb the inmost soul, while the outward man is covered with sackcloth and ashes, while the flesh is wasted with macerations, and bruises, and tortures.

The sorrow of sin is indeed far too awful a thing to be dealt with by formal methods of man's invention. God has consigned it to the secret chambers of the soul, there to be duly awakened only by the touch of his grace, not to be artificially excited by the importunity of penances and the exercises of a laborious spiritual discipline. A sense of guiltiness is doubtless felt at times by every human heart, however hardened. But a godly sorrow—a sorrow which has respect to the exceeding sinfulness of sin—which hates sin as the object of divine wrath, as that which demanded the love of the Son of God in order to its expiation—does not enter so readily into the heart of every man. It must be called down by faith in the atonement made for sin, and by

communion with the Holy Spirit, its Author and Giver, in prayer. He that would attempt to obtain this grace by laborious painful methods of human contrivance, that would humble himself with a humiliation which is not of God's appointing, does but tempt God, and feed his own soul with vanity. Like the priests of Baal, he piles the wood for the sacrifice, and calls upon his Lord to hear him and kindle it with the fire of heaven, but no fire descends: whereas the simple believer, like the true prophet of the Lord, relying simply on the promised blessing, lifts up his heart in faith, and through faith obtains at once that fire of heavenly love, the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, which enlightens and purifies the soul, creating in it living holiness, and stimulating it to active obedience.

But that artificial discipline which a perverted piety would substitute for the proper discipline of the Gospel, not only checks and tends to destroy Gospel convictions of sin, but it presents sin before the mind as something quite different in its nature and effects from what we learn of it in the

Bible. We are taught by the Bible that sin is a disorder of the soul, that the soul is its proper seat, that it is strictly a *moral* and not a *physical* evil. It is called, indeed, "the law of the flesh," "the law in the members," "the lust of the flesh," and the like, expressions which closely connect sin with the frailty of the body, but at the same time by no means imply that sin is the same thing as a sinfulness of the bodily nature. It is by the flesh that sin works; the body is its instrument. The bodily perceptions are the occasions and exciting causes of sin; and therefore sin is naturally described as "the law of the flesh" or of "the members." But though the body were entirely inert, though its avenues of pleasure and pain were stopped, still would sin, as an inward disorder of the soul, as a corruption of the moral powers, remain in the nature of man. For, as the apostle well describes the case, it is the being "carnally-*minded*" that is "death," and the being "spiritually-*minded*" that is "life and peace;" and the "carnal *mind*," not the mere flesh itself, that is "enmity against God." (Rom. viii. 6, 7.)

The Religious Uses of Sorrow.

[JELF.]

WHETHER we consider the *natural* workings of sorrow, or its more sanctified operations on the children of grace, the sum of the matter is this, that sorrow is in reality a blessing to those who use it aright. No man living, doubtless, does use it aright entirely, and therefore no man can consider it entirely in the light of a blessing. Some natural weakness will linger even about the most perfect resignation which man can offer. Many men certainly have embraced a crown of martyrdom; many have endured sorrow with Christian patience and submission—they have sorrowed, but not without hope; they have exclaimed, when their nearest and dearest friends have sunk into the grave, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1. 21.) But, humanly speaking, it is hard to obey to the letter the Apostolic injunction, "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings." (1 Peter iv. 13.) There has pro-

bably existed only One who, in the very agony of his distress, could pray with the *perfect* submission of his *whole* heart, "Not my will, but thine be done;" and even that most perfect pattern felt the horrors of his situation, and prayed that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him. But, whatever be the weakness of our flesh, it is still a positive truth, that "happy is the man whom God correcteth," and "blessed are they that mourn." Our inability to feel the *whole* of this blessing is no reason for our not feeling it at all. In whatever proportion we do feel it to be a blessing, we shall use it aright; and in whatever proportion we use it aright, we shall reap hereafter the blessed fruits of our Christian patience and forbearance. In that day the veil will be withdrawn, our eyes will be cleared from earthly tears, and we shall see these things *as they are*. It will then appear that sufferings are, like riches, or power, or health, or time, nothing more or less than talents committed to our care, talents, capable of being abused or neglected, or of being used and improved unto everlasting life. Each

temptation overcome has been a step to eternal security from temptation, each sorrow supported in Christian fortitude has been a fountain of everlasting joy. In that day we shall thank God for the very calamities which our feeble nature now recoils at, and we shall bless the tears which have been in some sort the means of bringing us through Christ to that place, where "the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." (Isaiah xxv. 8.)

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE DISPOSITION AND LEARNING NEEDED IN OUR TIME.

On Sound Learning.

[THIRLWALL.]

We may in some respects not improperly compare our national experience with that of the Royal Preacher, recorded in the text—"Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness." (Ecclesiastes ii. 13.) He had never, we know, been destitude of wisdom: but there was a time when he did not duly prize its worth. He turned aside from the Fountain of Light and Life, and gave up his darkened heart to vain pursuits, to the amassing of riches, to the pride of imperial dominion and of regal state: to the refinements of art and the pleasures of luxury. "I gathered me silver, and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me

men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: and whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them." But at last he "turned himself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly;" and then he "saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." We, too, notwithstanding our ample means of knowledge and our spiritual privileges, have too long bowed at the shrines of Mammon, and Moloch, and Belial. We have exulted in the vast extent of our empire, in the overflowing of our wealth, in the growing bulk and magnificence of our chief city, in the new devices of our luxury, and the witcheries of the arts which minister to our amusements. But now it would seem as if a change had come over our spirit, and we had become a soberer and wiser generation. We have begun to turn, and consider our ways, and to ask ourselves what fruit we have had in many things of which we were once so proud. And we are beginning to discover that we have spent much upon things which have profited us

little, on wars and conquests, on wild speculations of mercantile cupidity, and on works of ostentatious grandeur; while we have omitted to make any adequate provision for things of real use and urgent necessity; even for "the principal thing," that which is "more precious than rubies," and "for the lack of which a people is destroyed." Now we acknowledge our error, and see "that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness."

There may be a question whether we have a right to call ours an enlightened age, as if claiming superiority over those which have gone by. But it can hardly be denied, that it is a light-loving and a light-seeking age; one in which there is a general disposition to spread light everywhere, and to bring all things to the light, that they may be seen as they are. It is an age of restless curiosity and searching inquiry. If we fail to come at the truth, it is not because we ever shrink from approaching it; not because we let ourselves be stopped by any conventional barriers of usage or authority. We admit no right in any one to

judge for us, on subjects of which we are able to judge for ourselves. We take no opinion upon trust, because it has come down to us with the stamp of an honoured name. We adopt it only after we have made it our own, by a rigid scrutiny of its intrinsic claims to our assent. It is an age in which all pretensions to respect and deference are jealously examined, and in which it is more difficult than ever for any false pretences long to elude detection. If the age has its peculiar prejudices, they are rather in favour of innovation and experiment, than of tenacious adherence to ancient opinions or practices. The comparative excellence of the various branches of knowledge is itself subjected to a like unsparing scrutiny and free discussion, and their value is estimated, not by the abundance of the leaves or the beauty of the flowers, but by the fulness, and richness, and wholesomeness of the fruits: and those which are or seem to be found wanting, when tried by this practical test, sink in public esteem, and are accounted little better than a frivolous entertainment, fit only for the amusement

of leisure hours, and the satisfaction of a capricious taste and an idle curiosity. Again, the temper of this age is irreconcilably hostile to all privileges of caste, and to all monopolies of things which may and should be common: but more especially to such as tend to appropriate the light of knowledge to one class or portion of the community, and to prevent it from reaching the great mass of the people. It is agreed on all hands that this is as much their birthright as the light of day; and that it not only ought not to be kept from them, but that it is a national duty to diffuse it as widely as possible among them. Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the means, there is none worth noticing as to the end. In some way or other the people must be educated. And it is not meant that their instruction should be limited to the first rudiments of learning, or that, after they have been so put in the way to knowledge, they should be left to struggle with its difficulties, as best they may. They are to be furnished with all possible helps and encouragements to speed their progress. The finest and

most richly stored intellects of our time willingly apply themselves to this task, and deem it a worthy, if not the noblest, employment of their powers, to communicate the results of the most arduous researches in the most popular form, and to make them familiar and attractive to the multitude.

When such efforts are being made to elevate the intellectual condition of the lower classes, the higher cannot fitly or safely remain stationary. If they are to keep their vantage-ground, if they are to be looked up to with respect and confidence, if they are to be qualified to enlighten and direct those who are below them in station, then they must not lag behind in the general progress: their attainments must rise with the advancing standard of the age. And there are some other considerations which point to the like conclusion. We live in eventful, changeful, critical times. We have just witnessed the revolution of a hurricane, which has swept round the greater part of the civilised world, levelling ancient thrones and dynasties, uprooting time-honoured institutions,

and shaking the foundations of civil society. We have watched its desolating circuit, first with fear, and then with wonder at our own singular felicity, in having escaped being drawn into its eddy. But, as the slightest shock of an earthquake weakens our sense of stability, by revealing the presence of tremendous powers, to whose action we can neither see nor set any limits, so it is hardly possible for those who have been spectators of such convulsions—so close at hand, as at least to have felt the reverberation of their movements—to retain all their confidence in their own security. And without indulging in fanciful and gloomy forebodings, we see ground enough, in the aspect of our times, for believing that the course of this world was never more exposed to the danger of violent perturbations, and that those who are now growing up to manhood are probably destined to severer trials and harder struggles than this generation has yet passed through; and that, both with a view to their own success and safety, and to the service of the commonwealth, they must learn to rely, not on any accidents of rank

or fortune, but on that which is most truly their own: that which is their own by nature, or which they have made their own by labour and study: on their energies and principles, on their ability and intrinsic worth.

When all this is so, it is evident that the education of the class on which rests the main part of our hopes for the future, must be a work of still greater importance than in ordinary times; and it must be more difficult for the institutions which undertake this task to rise to the height of the exigency. And from one which is newly founded for this object,* even more may not unreasonably be expected and required, than from those which have been long established. For it enters upon its career with all the advantage of their experience, and yet free from the trammels of ancient rules and traditions. It can plead no prescription for any methods which will not bear the strictest examination upon general principles. It can allege no excuse for blindly following a

* This was delivered on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of the Welsh Educational Institution, December 13, 1849.

beaten track. The auspices under which this institution has been opened, warrant us in trusting that it will prove itself worthy of the opportunities it enjoys, and equal to the weight of the responsibility it incurs. The less can it be needful that I should attempt to offer any advice on the means by which it may best accomplish its end; nor, if I were disposed to do so, would this be the proper place or time for the discussion of such a subject. But it may not be unsuitable on this occasion, if I venture to make a few remarks on the general character and spirit of that education which seems to me to be called for from an institution planted under such circumstances, that it may satisfy the real wants of our age and people.

And, first, I should say that the instruction which it imparts should be *sound*. *Sound learning* is a phrase with which we are familiar, as denoting something on the value of which all are agreed, and which, moreover, it is at least the professed aim of every place of education, in its measure and degree, to communicate. But it is a phrase which admits of some latitude of interpretation,

and there has been no little difference of opinion as to what kind of learning it is that deserves the epithet. Soundness in learning may be opposed to error; for that may be taught as well as truth. Or it may be opposed to what is light and trifling; for there is such a thing as a strenuous idleness, and there are laborious trifles, things not the less utterly worthless, because they cannot be mastered without infinite pains. Or, again, it may be opposed to empty show—to that which is slight, loose, and superficial, without depth, heart, or substance. And this was noted long ago by a great thinker as "the first distemper of learning, when men study words and not matter." And though these different modes of unsoundness are closely related to one another—for error most commonly springs from the want either of earnestness or of diligence, and is almost irreparable from shallow and imperfect knowledge—it is this last-mentioned distemper that is most immediately to be dreaded in every such seat of learning as this, and that has thrown most discredit upon such institutions, and upon learning itself. For

it cannot be denied that their ordinary teaching is chiefly conversant with words, and that there is a constant tendency in men, but especially in youth, to "study words and not matter;" to make language a substitute for thinking, instead of an instrument and vehicle of thought. And there is, perhaps, especial danger from this temptation, when the language they have to deal with is foreign, and has been long extinct as a living speech, and is only to be acquired through the medium of books. Hence the value of such studies has often been called in question, especially in our day. It is, however, to be hoped that the occasional abuse will never be permitted to drive out their legitimate use, but rather will give way to it more and more. If the written monuments of ancient wisdom and genius, which have been spared to us, were no way superior to those of later times—if they were not inestimably precious in themselves both as records and as models, both for the purpose of informing the mind and of cultivating the taste—still they would have acquired a value which they can

never lose, and for which no equivalent can ever be found in the productions of modern intellects, from the fact that the noblest spirits of Christendom have been quickened and moulded by their influence, and that the greatest works of our modern civilisation itself, to which they have so largely contributed, would, without the light which they throw on it, be in a great degree unintelligible to us. To depose these studies from the place which they have hitherto occupied in every system of liberal education, would be virtually to sever the past from the present, and so to lose all sure guidance for the future, and to throw society back into a state of barbarism, in which all thoughts are engrossed by the concerns of the passing day. And, among its other more particular consequences, one would be to lock up the fountains of revealed truth, and to reduce the sacred oracles to a sealed book and a dead letter.

The question therefore is not, or at least ought not be, as to any change in the kind of learning required, but as to the quality which constitutes it *sound* learning. And such it will be, where

due care is taken that language is applied to its proper use; that it serves as an instrument, not only for expressing thought, but for shaping it into distinct well-defined forms, fit for the reasoning faculties to work upon; that all the notions it conveys are subjected to the test of exact weight and measure; that the learner is trained to regard truth as the fountain of all intellectual beauty; to examine the most splendid creations of poetry and eloquence in her pure *dry* light; to seek for, and aim at, clear conceptions before brilliant display; never to rest content with any partial glimpses, any vague, dim, shadowy outlines, but to gaze upon the images of the remote past, until they are brought home to his mind with the vividness and force of a present reality.

And then I would add, that the instruction he receives should likewise be *large*. But here, too, it is necessary to explain and distinguish; for the term is relative, and will convey no clear meaning, unless it is referred to some standard of comparison. The soundest learning may be confined within a very narrow compass; but so long as it

retains its quality, it will be the more valuable the wider the range over which it is diffused. On the other hand, the field of knowledge is boundless, and the attention is distracted, and time and faculties are wasted, if they are employed upon a too multifarious variety of objects. To find a just mean between such a pernicious dispersion, and an excessive concentration of the youthful energies, is one of the great problems of modern education. But there is a growing disposition to believe that the circle traced by the usage of former times for the objects of learning may be profitably extended; and that a system which only opens a few pages of the volume of History, without unrolling any portion of the book of Nature, is not sufficiently large. And this is an opinion which it would not be wise or safe for us to disregard. The extent to which it may be beneficially carried into practice, is a question which must be left to the judgment and experience of those with whom the responsibility rests. But I venture to think that a course of education will not long be commonly accounted large or liberal, which confines itself,

even in its early stage, to a single branch of knowledge, and which does not at least open an access to the rest, by embracing such studies as are preparatory to them, by exercising the faculties which are especially employed upon them, and by giving such an insight into their nature as may awaken an intelligent curiosity, and a desire for farther proficiency in them.

And once more, and above all, I would say that the education afforded by such an institution as this should be *practical.* And by this I mean neither to include nor to exclude that which often passes under the name, as if alone entitled to it—the knowledge which is applicable to the supply of the material wants of society. I could not admit that the sciences which are connected with this object are either eminently practical or eminently progressive, unless I believed that historical knowledge has no bearing upon action, or that it admits of no enlargement from future observations and discoveries. But when I speak of *practical* education, I am speaking of that quality, without which no education deserves the name,

and which involves the highest end of all learning. What that end is, I may express in a few words better and weightier than my own. Our great sacred poet, whose learning was only inferior to his genius, when he was about to sketch a scheme of education so large and comprehensive, that it would seem as if our age must have degenerated from one in which so vast a thought could be conceived, prefaces his proposal with this description of its ultimate object:—"The end," he says, "of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents, by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him, as we may the nearest, by possessing our souls of true virtue, which, being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection." And it is evident that this is an end which must be kept constantly in view, and that the providing for it is not a business for which particular seasons are to be set apart, so that it may take its turn with others, but one which should be going on at all times. The discipline of the mind should be kept sub-

servient to the discipline of the heart and of the will. Truth should be exhibited in its eternal triune being, as inseparably united with beauty and goodness. I have said that truth is the fountain of beauty; and the father of modern philosophy observes, "Certain it is that truth and goodness differ but as the seal and the print; for truth prints goodness." This is the impression which we would have continually made on the learner's mind by all his studies, whether they relate to the works or to the ways of God, to nature or to history. In all, he should be led to seek, and to love, wherever it is found, the True, the Beautiful, and the Good. Where such is the prevailing spirit of the place, the school becomes holy ground; a temple ever ringing with the exhortation, "SURSUM CORDA." UPWARD, HEARTS—upward, above all paltry, sordid, grovelling aims and desires: upward, to a level with the dignity of your calling, the privileges and duties of your station, the importance and arduousness of your work: upward, to a fellowship with the wise and good of all ages and all nations: upward, to the

Father of Lights, the Fountain of all Goodness: LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS. And from the inmost depth of many devoted wills there rises the clear response, WE LIFT THEM UP UNTO THE LORD.

It is only when it has been thus purified and hallowed by charity and piety, that knowledge is sublimated into that wisdom, of which such excellent things are spoken, and to which such glorious promises are made, in the Word of God. The Royal Preacher, indeed, immediately after that commendation of wisdom which has furnished a theme for our present meditations, subjoins a reflection, which, like many in this singular and difficult book, has a perplexing and a saddening sound, as if it came from another voice than that which had just declared, "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." For he proceeds to say, "The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness; and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all." To the wise man and to the fool; but that one event which happens to them, as to all mankind, is the only point in

their history that is common to both. To the wise man and to the fool; but not to wisdom and to folly, any more than to light and to darkness. For light and wisdom spring from the same divine perennial Source, and can never be quenched or pass away. To the wise man and to the fool—to him who devotes his laborious days to the cause of truth and goodness, and to him who wastes his time and faculties upon selfish, frivolous, or mischievous pursuits—there happeneth one event—one in its nature; but how different its consequences for the one, from those which attend it for the other! The one closes a mis-spent life in an unblessed, unhonoured grave, with shame behind, and terrors before him. The other rests from his labours; but his works follow him. His memorial has not perished with him. Even upon earth he lives on, in the remembrance of the wise and good. The torch he carried is not reversed, but handed down to give light to future generations. His hope is full of immortality. That for which, and in which, he lived can never die. His name is enrolled among those

who stood on the side of light against darkness, of good against evil. He will share their triumph. When all the powers of evil shall have been put to flight, when the last shades of darkness shall have melted into the perfect day, he will still be found amid that glorious company, beaming with the light of heavenly Wisdom, glowing with the warmth of infinite Love.

CHAPTER X.

ON SPIRITUALITY AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS.

The Pursuit of Righteousness.

[SUMNER.]

WE need but a little acquaintance with mankind in order to perceive that their pursuits are exceedingly various; the objects which they "thirst after" widely different. Some make pleasure their idol; and, to attain it, throw off all restraint, "doing even what they list." Others have no higher view than the acquisition of wealth, and the providing largely for the present and future support of their families. With others, to attain a place of great distinction, to be widely known and enjoy a high reputation among men, appears of all things the most desirable. In the meantime, God is forgotten, his worship is neglected, his Scriptures despised, his will unknown; whe-

ther He has made a revelation, or whether such lives conform to it, is no more considered than if it concerned a different race of beings. I need hardly say, then, that all who live with these views mainly before their eyes, are going astray more or less widely, more or less dangerously. Our Lord's blessing applies not to them. No blessing, but rather wo, attaches to those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim. iii. 4.), even if their pleasures are what it is common to term innocent: should they be of a guilty nature, we are distinctly assured that those who seek them "have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ or of God." (Eph. v. 5.) No blessing attaches to the covetous man, who is declared to be "an idolater" (Col. iii. 5.), and reminded "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii. 36.) No blessing attaches to the lover of worldly honours and distinctions; for "know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" (James iv. 4.) "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For

all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." (1 John ii. 16.) The business of life, therefore, is to seek that which shall not "pass away; shall abide for ever," when human reputation is of no value, and earthly pleasures fail, and worldly goods perish, with those who have trusted in them. That which shall so abide is RIGHTEOUSNESS. RIGHTEOUSNESS is the first and great concern. In due subordination to this main object, let a man taste of pleasure, as a traveller would taste of a spring by the wayside; let him labour in his vocation, that he and his family may eat of the bread of industry, and be thankful; let him gratefully enjoy such honours as belong to the understanding with which God has endued him, or to the station in which God has placed him. But let not these be the principal objects of his wishes or pursuits, so that he shall at any time be ready to say, when I attain these, I shall be satisfied: let them be, rather, the fruit which he plucks by the way, as he travels

through the wilderness of this world, than the chief support and provision of his journey, or still more the objects for which he takes it; let him not "hunger and thirst after" reputation, or pleasures, or wealth, as things necessary to his existence, or even to his happiness. No, my brethren, "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" the righteousness required by Him: then, if earthly blessings are added unto you, receive them, enjoy them, acknowledge them, as the gifts of a gracious and merciful Creator. If, on the contrary, they are withheld, doubt not that there is mercy in denying no less than in giving; remember that the Lord often "chasteneth" those most whom most he "loveth" (Hebrews xii. 6); that it is a faithful promise, "that all things shall work together for good to them that love Him" (Rom. viii. 28), however wearisome or painful the present dispensation may appear: for those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled," be satisfied in the end.

But there is another class of persons, who, though not absolutely "despising the righteous-

ness of God," like those to whom I have been hitherto alluding, are yet very careless, very indifferent respecting it. They do not, indeed, throw off religion, or altogether neglect its forms, or run into any excesses which might injure their character. But they take up with any idea of the will of God, and of the extent of Christian duty, which others may hold, or which may suit their own practice; they seek no personal interest in their Redeemer, and cannot, even in the lowest sense, be said to "live unto Him who died for them." (2 Cor. v. 14.) They do not strive to go on unto perfection, or to "grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. iii. 18.) Such persons, perhaps, in the eyes of the world or the opinion of Christian charity, may pass with little to blame. But, as an anxious parent or a skilful physician will often discover an unsoundness in the constitution which a slight observer might deem secure, so is it with the health of the soul: the sincere friend, the zealous minister, cannot but see symptoms of alarming danger in this supine indifference; cannot but per-

ceive that in this cold and languid interest about an eternal concern, in this Sunday religion (if, indeed, it does last through the whole of Sunday, and is not forgotten when the service is closed), there is something very short of what the Gospel requires, and its genuine followers in all ages have practised.

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The Scripture is given as our rule of RIGHTEOUSNESS: it acquaints us with the will of God; it points out the method of acceptance which He has revealed, and the way of living which He has prescribed. What is this sacred book to you? Is it the book which you most frequently study and consult, and are most ashamed to be ignorant of? Is it the book by which you habitually desire to regulate your thoughts, and words, and deeds? Or do you drive it from your recollection, whenever it suggests that the mode in which you live, and the habits which you indulge, are contrary to the divine law? He, surely, who is longing "after righteousness," will not turn away from the Counsellor who shows him what it is, and how it is to be attained.

Again: private prayer and the public worship of God, when sincerely practised, inspire us with an increasing knowledge and love of the "way of righteousness." Is it in this view that we are regular in private devotion? Is it in this light that we see the public services of the Church? As what are able to convert or amend the heart, and bring it to the temper which God requires? Or do we merely treat them as forms which it is decent to observe, without seeking, or caring for, any holy effects and consequences? He who is earnestly desiring to gain an object, will watch every step in his progress, will mark what has hindered and what has advanced him in it: he needs no exhortation to profit by every opportunity within his reach. For example, the holy sacrament is a public testimony that we are "living in the faith of the Son of God;" that for our salvation, our eternal life, we are looking to the sacrifice which we there commemorate. Experience fully proves that nothing more surely draws down the grace of the Redeemer, or more powerfully assists the Christian in his onward progress, than

a reasonable and devout attendance at that holy table. Those, then, who attend it with no reasonable sense of the service in which they engage, and, above all, those who abstain from that service altogether, have a positive evidence against themselves that they, at least, are not "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." He that is, will feel the value of this spiritual feast, and neither want persuasions to bring him, nor allow any trifling hindrance or vain excuse to detain him away.

Again: if we desired to know what spirit a man was of, we should naturally look to the society which he preferred, the books which he studied, the conversation which he promoted. Inquire of yourselves by this rule. In what light do you treat religious persons, religious books, religious conversation? Do you avoid them, turn away from them with a sneer, or regard them with aversion? Or do you eagerly apply to them all, when opportunity permits, as efficacious means of promoting the great end before you? Of course, I am far from insinuating that no conversation

can be innocent, and no books useful, except those that bear upon religious points. I am not now prescribing a rule, but proposing a test; and if "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii. 34), let me ask whether a man can be "hungering and thirsting after" that which he never talks of, never studies, and eagerly dismisses from his thoughts?

Once more: if you are making the attainment of righteousness your leading object, you habitually avoid whatever tends to withdraw you from it: you are afraid of worldly pleasures; you disencumber yourself, as far as possible, of worldly cares. Here, again, take an example from those who seek any other object. Ask a man who is desiring to improve his fortune, to join in this or that idle pursuit, he will reply, that business is urgent, and must be first attended to. Ask the same of a man who is aspiring after eternal happiness, and will not he reply that the business of the soul must be first attended to? Will he not resolutely keep clear of every unnecessary care, every doubtful pleasure, which might possibly

divert him from his main concern? If this is undeniable, then it follows, on the other hand, that if any one is leaving no pleasures untasted, however unprofitable or questionable, which come within his reach, or is encumbering himself with worldly cares in a greater degree than the duties of his station oblige him, that man has a witness in himself that he is not "hungering and thirsting after righteousness."

Christian Faith Manifested in the Habits of Life.

[SUMNER.]

LET no one be afraid to examine the practice of his life, as well as the assurance of his heart, for evidence that he is "in Christ Jesus." Let no one confound this with legality or self-righteousness. St James, as we perceive by the text (James ii. 22), requires such self-inquiry. St John supports him; of whose first and chief epistle the greater portion is employed in describing the proofs by which we may "know that we are of

the truth," and may therefore "have confidence before God." (1 John iii. 19–21.) St Paul practised the same examination; and declares, "Our rejoicing is this; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." (2 Cor. i. 12.) Paul did not value himself on this course of life, or depend on it for justification. We know how studiously he deprecates such thoughts, both for himself and others. And, whatever may be supposed, they who have been led by the Spirit most carefully to watch over themselves, to govern their inward desires by the principles of the Gospel, and to bring their active habits "to the obedience of Christ," they will be the persons who will most gladly claim another and a better righteousness than their own. To *perfect our faith* by our works, is not to take a deed of charity, or a deed of justice, or a habit of devotion, or a habit of temperance, and place them in the scale together with faith, and so make out the weight which God demands. This is no more like the idea of

salvation which Scripture presents, than the Word of God is like the word of man. The Christian's language is uniform and consistent: God forbid that I should depend on anything save on the cross of the Lord Jesus. Still, God forbid that I should depend upon his cross, unless by it "the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14): unless I give all diligence, that I may not "be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter i. 8): unless I show by my habits what is written on my heart, and "live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) For I am expressly assured, that not every one who calleth Christ "Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of his Father which is in heaven."

Connection between Christian Faith and Christian Practice.

[SUMNER.]

It is true, all will not reach a like degree of eminence in all the Christian virtues. Some Christians will be "poor in spirit" beyond others; either because they look back with remorse at having long lived "without God in the world," or gone great lengths in sin; or because they have naturally a heart more easily broken, more keenly sensible of the "terrors of the Lord." Others, who are by nature of a mild and placid temper, will more readily exercise that meekness which the Gospel inculcates: and others will be remarkable for their zealous activity in doing good to their fellow-creatures. So also there will be degrees in purity of heart, in spirituality of mind: all will not attain the same command over their passions and desires, nor be equally dead to the pleasures and honours of the world. But then, although Christians may attain a different degree of eminence in different virtues, as they may be

remarkable for different natural gifts and talents, they will not be absolutely wanting in any of the features of the Christian character; still less will they admit or retain the opposite vices. One Christian may be a greater mourner for sin than another; but no Christian will trust to his own righteousness, or fail to lament his numberless transgressions and his daily infirmities. One Christian may be distinguished, like Moses, as the "meekest man of all the earth;" but none will be habitually violent or revengeful. One Christian may give half his goods to the poor, or may spend his life in seeking objects of charity, and traverse distant countries to relieve the spiritual and temporal wants of his fellow-creatures: this will be in the heart or in the power of but few; yet still no Christian can be without mercy and charity in its fullest sense; can be too covetous to assist distress, or too resentful to pardon those who may trespass against him. No Christian will be yielding to the dominion of sinful lusts; no Christian will be satisfied with himself, "as though he had attained, either were already

perfect" (Phil. iii. 12.); but will be ever eagerly desiring to grow in righteousness. No Christian will be induced, by the fear of worldly reproach or loss, to "deny the Lord that bought him;" or refuse to "confess Him before men." (2 Pet. ii. 1; Matt. x. 32.) He may indeed be surprised into some of these sins; but they will not be wilful; they will not be habitual; they will not be a part of his general character, but an exception to it; they will not be allowed by himself, but earnestly contended against, and heartily repented of.

Such is the Christian character, springing out of a lively faith in the Son of God, implanted and nourished in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

The Child-like Mind.

[TAIT.]

WE usually draw a distinction between the words child-like and childish. By the first we designate the good, by the other the bad, qualities of childhood. The child-like temper has the simplicity and humility of children—the childish, their weakness

and frivolity. There is, of course, no doubt which of the two our Lord is recommending in the text. (Mark x. 15.) Compare the account of his words in St Matthew (xviii. 3). "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Observe the words, "Except ye be converted and become as little children:" it requires a great change to pass over us before either boy or man can attain this child-like temper; but without it we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The child-like temper is nowise inconsistent with true manliness—manliness both of the intellect and of the will and feelings. Well-meaning persons sometimes fall into the mistake of contrasting the heroic with the Christian character, as if the highest heroism were not that which is distinctly Christian. The difference, I presume, between mere heathen or worldly manliness and the manliness of the Christian is, that the first is entirely

self-dependent, while the other ever humbly depends on God. The Christian martyr, as much as the hero of this world, has overcome the natural weakness which would make us always to be timidly looking out for support from our fellow-men: he has learned, in one sense, to stand alone; but then, in another sense, he knows that he is not alone. He has an ever-present feeling that the Lord Jesus Christ is with him to strengthen him; and this gives him an energy, imparted from without, which is made perfect in his humble sense of his own weakness, and, therefore, in all troubles he leans secure upon a rock—the Rock of Ages; while the man who is self-dependent has but a treacherous support. The humility, then, of the child-like character given by the Holy Spirit of God to Christians, makes them more instead of less brave in all dangers. It teaches them, it is true, their own weakness, but only to make them more conscious of a heavenly strength from without. And thus they are holden up, whether it be a sudden or a lingering death, or whatever other evil, that assails them. Suppose

two men, of equal physical energy, to be going together to the wars; the one relying, like the uncircumcised Philistine, on his good sword and strength of arm—the other supported by a sense of the ever-present help of the God of battles: which is likely to prove, under all reverses, the most really brave soldier? No impartial inquirer will, I suppose, doubt that the annals of Christian martyrdom, telling as they do of those who out of weakness were made strong, present records of an indomitable spirit triumphant in sufferings, such as mere human heroism cannot equal. To be child-like, then, in nowise implies that we shall, like children, be wanting in manly boldness.

Again: the Christian child-like temper has nothing in it of the folly of childhood. As a general statement, every one assents to this. No one maintains directly that a humble and simple mind, wrought in us by the Spirit of God, will attach us to trivial matters, or incapacitate us for feeling an interest in all events of really deep moment. True, the Christian will maintain that many things which the world deems most momentous are really

trivial, and many which seem trifles are concerned with the truest interests of immortal souls. And the simple child-like mind will understand that many of the things which the world despises are most highly esteemed by God. For example, the Christian will know, and not merely repeat the assertion, but feel it, that to visit the poor, and pray by the bed of the dying, and comfort the broken-hearted, by giving them the consolations of the Gospel, is, in the estimation of God, and of all whom He enables to weigh things according to their real value for eternity, a far nobler occupation than to command armies, or have senates hanging on our words. But still the Christian will not suppose that events by which God works out the destinies of nations are not well entitled to call forth our interest. He will view them differently from the worldly man; he will not merely look upon them as a gladiatorial show, in which a deep interest is excited by its displaying so vividly before us the energy of human power; he will think of them chiefly as working out the purposes of God. Still less will he indulge him-

self in that not unnatural longing which sometimes seizes the heart, itself to plunge into such stirring scenes, and makes it discontented if it is kept away from them. All he knows and sees of such matters will make him more deeply prize those calmer ways of Christian duty, where no angry passions are violently called forth, and yet the interests at stake are the very highest, since on an earnest discharge of them directly depends the eternal happiness of souls. So that, while he takes a pure interest in public events, the most private life will never appear dull to him. No life will be dull to him except that which is wasted in frivolous amusement. Wherever he can do good to his own or his neighbour's soul, be the sphere ever so lowly, there he will recognise duties and interests of the highest order. Where the worldly can see nothing but dulness, all with him will be full of life; for all will speak of opportunities to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and advance that kingdom which lasts for eternity.

Now sometimes well-meaning men mistake in this—teaching that a humble simple-minded Chris-

tian takes no interest in public matters. What ought to be said is, that his interest in these will be purified, and that he will estimate them at their real value.

Again: it is a mistake to suppose that the child-like mind does not appreciate the great worth of human learning. Human learning, it is true, is but foolishness, compared with the wisdom of the all-knowing God. But to cultivate our intellects is a duty which He has laid upon us. By following out this duty, He enables us to approach to some slight acquaintance with deep secrets which He alone knows perfectly. Perhaps He may intend the happiness of some of us in another world to be in some degree dependent on the vigorous use of these intellectual faculties which are part of our undying nature; and therefore it may be that He thus calls on some of us, by the rich opportunities He bestows, to cultivate these faculties to the utmost. At all events He does call on us to use them, and enables us, though most imperfectly, through the acquisition of knowledge, to rise to some faint resemblance of his own omni-

science. Indeed, there is nothing more characteristic of the simplicity of the child than its desire to acquire knowledge! the simple child is always learning: only observe, that he learns the more because he is so fully aware of his own ignorance. And thus the Christian child-like temper in mature years will be quite opposed to that conceit of knowledge which genders pride. It will never allow us to worship intellect, as if to know were the highest end of man's being. The simple Christian will feel certain that to love God and Christ, and labour for his cause, is much more truly the chief end of man; but he will strive to know also, only he will think it folly indeed to be proud of the little he does know, seeing that man's highest knowledge is not very far removed from deep ignorance.

Again: there is another mistake on this subject, even more directly connected with our conceptions of the religion which is acceptable to God in Christians. Our religion is not to be childish because Christians must be child-like. St Paul speaks of babes in Christ; that is, of those who know only

the first elements, and have not yet advanced, by the Holy Spirit's help, to a deeper acquaintance with the wants of their souls, and with the blessings Christ bestows on them. Doubtless, even to have made this childish progress is a great blessing; to have received some true knowledge of things divine, however slight, and some true love for Christ, is the beginning of our soul's salvation. But every one understands that we must pray and strive to grow beyond this childhood in religion. The Christian is ever growing in the knowledge and love of God in Christ. The very test to which we are required to bring the reality of our Christianity is this—whether we be growing; whether we be becoming more able to restrain ourselves; more devout; more able to realise the presence of Christ and hold communion with Him as years advance. All grant that to have begun, by God's grace, is not to have advanced to Christian maturity.

Theoretically, at least, there is not much mistake in this point; though sometimes in practice those who are very young in the knowledge and

love of Christ have been misled with the great mistake of supposing that their fresh feelings are more really valuable than the steady perseverance of those whom the Holy Spirit has enabled to glorify their Lord and Master by many years of faithful waiting on Him. But, theoretically at least, I say, there is in this point not much mistake. Men know, in this sense, that to be in the childhood of Christianity is not to be child-like.

Sometimes, however, they are apt (as to the point on which I am now speaking) rather to mistake in another way, by supposing that the religion in which they are to make progress, and which Christ loves, is a childish religion. A child's mind (*e. g.*) is naturally liable to superstitious fears; he is liable also to be imposed on by any foolish story told by those about him; and some have so far mistaken the nature of child-like Christian faith as to confound it with childish superstition and credulity; as if it were a mark of true humility to fear that which, through God's mercy, has no power to hurt us; or of true faith, to believe that which the voice of God, speaking

within us, pronounces unhesitatingly to be a lie. This were, indeed, to degrade the Christian temper, while we say that it ought to imitate childhood in its worst features. Ought the child to fear the dark, or the sound of the wind, while safe in his father's arms? Does not a wise father still his child's fears, reminding him that he himself watches over him, and God watches over both? And shall we say that a grown Christian man is wanting in humility, if—secure in the almighty protection of the Lord Jesus Christ—he refuses to fear that he may be affected, either for good or evil, by created angelic powers or the spirits of dead men, and that he is treating them with disrespect, and may lose their favour, if he does not bow down his head and repeat his prayers before their images? To be superstitious is childish. It is child-like in the right sense, to feel no vain fears while we cling close to our ever-present Father or elder Brother, God manifested in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again: whether ought a child to believe the falsehoods which other children tell him, or the

teaching which he knows to come from a wise and good father? In most cases it will be found that the baseless stories of men's invention, to which the Christian is sometimes called to listen as if they came from the Word of life, are, when fully carried to their consequences, directly opposed to the simple Gospel which Christ teaches. They may appear harmless inventions at first, for they are cunningly devised, but, when fully understood, they oppose Christ's Gospel. And shall we be charged with a want of faith in rejecting them, because we know them to be opposed to the direct voice of the Christian conscience within, instructed by the book of God without? Nay, credulity is so different from real Christian faith, that it may easily destroy it; as a child may be led, by believing his childish companions, to distrust his parents' solemn word.

Once more in the same matter, it is childish in the concerns of religion to be caught by mere outward show. Of all humanly-devised helps to devotion, which can be guarded from evil, we may well avail ourselves: but the moment a man feels

that such things have become too important to him—that he is in danger of mistaking the shadow for the substance—he is right to be on his guard. Most men will be the better of such helps, used prudently, but no one can fairly be accused of a want of true Christian humility in rejecting them, if he conscientiously believes that for him they are not good. It is the proof of a childish, not of a humble spirit, to take that which is only useful as a means in religion, and reverence it as if it were itself an end, and to confound indifferent matters of ceremony with the essence of faith. This childishness (*e.g.*) is a real impediment to his religion, who expends on the outward helps—say, of music, painting, architecture—that ardent zeal which is only due to the defence of God's Word in its purity, and the maintenance of the eternal distinctions between right and wrong.

But enough of the mistakes by which the childish is sought to be substituted for the child-like.

Perhaps you may think that these particular instances may not apply especially to you: still it is well that you should have them pointed out, lest

at any time you be deceived by words. To recapitulate—the child-like in the Christian temper is not opposed to manly Christian boldness; nor yet to a manly Christian appreciation of the greatness of the events of the world's history; nor yet to a manly Christian love of knowledge; nor yet to manly intelligence in Christian faith and worship. The Christian who is the most manly in all the points here mentioned may be, by God's grace, also the most humble and simple-minded. It is in humility and simplicity that, by God's grace, we must all become as little children. And whatever you may think of the illustrations that have been now given, certainly for every one of you here present* there is great danger lest you still continue childish in some bad sense, while you lose the simplicity and humility of childhood. There is danger in your every-day life, lest you be cowardly, like timid children, afraid to stand alone, shrinking from the maintenance of what Christ loves, because the irreligious around you

* Delivered at Rugby.

frown or scoff. There is danger lest you give up your hearts, like children, to vain trifling amusements, and find in them your chief interest, forgetful of your souls. There is great practical danger, also, that in your attempts to approach God in prayer, and in all your direct religious exercises, you have all the wandering thoughts of children, all their indistinct or mean conceptions of the majesty of Him whom you are addressing; and never learn in manly faith to give up your hearts to Him, while you strive earnestly, with all your best and highest powers, to know Him and to learn his will. This is to be childish and unchristian.

One sentence, in conclusion, will help you directly to apply the text—"Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." If you think highly of yourselves, you have not the child-like mind which Christ loves. If you are thinking highly of yourselves, you may soon learn that this evil is at work by your overbearing, disrespectful thoughts of those around you, if not by the words

which you address to them. If you are self-willed, you are not docile, and therefore not child-like. And above all, you are not child-like, if you do not continually feel your need of turning to the Lord Jesus Christ for help in all difficulties, and are not willing implicitly to trust Him. This is, indeed, the real essence of religion, to feel towards God in Christ as children to a father. We cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven without this child-like love and trust.

The Life of the Spirit.

[HARE.]

THE whole race of the children of Adam are like their first father in this, that they think they shall gain the living objects of their aim, by making use of the creature according to their own will, not according to the will of God. Satan is evermore whispering and muttering to us, that we shall never become wise by merely walking in the path of duty, and seeking the knowledge of good, without the knowledge of evil; that we shall never

become rich by self-denial and contentment; that we shall never become powerful by meekness and patience; that we shall never become glorious by humility and submission. "*No,*" he says; "*if you want to be rich, and powerful, and glorious, you must sweep together as much as you can of the precious things of this world.* You must get lands; you must get houses; you must get flocks and herds; you must get gold and silver—much—much—all that you can—the more the better. Then you will indeed be rich; then you will have power over your neighbours; then you will be glorious in the eyes of the world." He says this in one way or other to us all; and we all believe him. What is this but seeking the living among the dead? It was thus that Adam gave up his heart to the creature; and thus all his children have done ever since.

You may tell me, indeed, that you have never indulged in such high thoughts; that you have never dreamed of seeking riches, or power, or glory, and that, therefore, you must be innocent of this sin of seeking the living among the dead. But the

sin I am speaking of is not one of more or less. It is one of kind, not of degree. A fly may be over-greedy, as well as a crocodile or a leviathan. Adam's sin did not lie in his seeking to conquer a large empire, or to fill his treasury with the gold of Ophir. A single apple was enough to draw away his heart from God; and in giving up his heart to that apple, instead of to God, he sinned. In like manner, you, my brethren, who are set upon the earth as Adam was in the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it, if you were to fulfil this your task in simple humble obedience to God, with your hearts fixed upon doing the will of God, and not your own will, upon showing forth the glory of God, and not, as they are mainly, upon gaining what you can for yourselves, you would not sin. But because God is not in all your thoughts; because you let the thoughts of this world, and the cares of this world, and the desires of this world, drive the thought of God out of your hearts, therefore you sin, like Adam, and all the rest of his children, in seeking the living among the dead.

For although the things of this world, as being God's creatures, have all a certain kind of life in them, when they are regarded in connection with God, as his creatures, or as his gifts; and although, when so regarded, they may be made to minister to living purposes, the moment they are severed from God, that life passes away from them. They become the children of death, and they carry the taint of death along with them, whithersoever they go. Instead of satisfying our desires, they increase our cravings. The more we feed on them, the hungrier and thirstier they make us, with a hunger and thirst that shall never be filled. They abide not with us. Even while they do, they change their features, and lose their charms, and fade, and anon they make themselves wings, and flee away. Or at all events, death snatches them from us, and us from them, and, however rich, and powerful, and glorious we may have been, after the fashion of this world, casts us down into a pit of poverty, and weakness, and shame. Even though we should contrive to bury ourselves alive, in a grave walled with solid gold,

the time will come when we must sink out of this grave into one of common earth—the time when we shall find that the worms are no respecters of persons.

Therefore, because we are so prone to seek the living among the dead, greatly do we need that the angels should call on us to seek the living among the living. Because, when left to ourselves, we set all our affections on things on the earth, we need to be exhorted continually to set them on things above. Say not that you dare not; say not that you cannot. If Christ had not risen from the dead, then indeed there would have been no hope for us. We should have been utterly unable to seek living things in the realm of life; our hearts must have gone on burrowing in death, until we sank into it. But now, seeing that Christ is risen out of the bonds of death, and has taken his seat in heavenly places at the right hand of God, we too may lift up our hearts to Him, and following Him into heavenly places, may seek the living among the living.

Diffusive Christianity.

[WHEWELL.]

In every corner, in every form, in endless usages, in unmarked influences, in weekly ministrations, in daily offers of comfort, in ties that bind the highest and the lowest, the present instant and the remote past, we enjoy the benefits conferred by those who, being themselves provoked to love and good works by their Christian teachers, sought to secure a perpetual succession of such teaching, by which *they*, through all succeeding time, might *also* provoke to love and good works the generations which should come after them.

And this has been done at every period. From the ages which we often especially designate by speaking of their *darkness*, has this light especially shined upon us. From the times of national tumult, and war, and bloodshed, thus issues to us, out of many a sacred recess, the message of the Gospel of peace. And, blessed be God! the stock of men thus filled with a truly Christian spirit of care for their brethren, has never failed or inter-

mitted. There have been, even down to our own time, many men zealous of such good works. There have been, from the times of the Apostles, we trust even to our own time, men who have acted upon the conviction of that which we have tried to express—that Christians are a sacred company, a band dedicated to the service of God, whose business it is to spread the knowledge of God upon the earth; to turn men from the power of Satan to the power of God; to draw them from that untamed mood of men, in which lusts and angers place them in turmoil and variance, to the love of each other, to the thought of God, to the love of Christ, to the influence of his Spirit, to the imitation of his character. Christians are a Holy Priesthood set apart for this ministration; a Universal Church, everywhere earnestly endeavouring to draw men into its fold; a perpetual body of Missionaries, in every country labouring among unbelievers, but always trusting that they shall turn some from their unbelief. They are, in all ages, and in every society, as their Divine Head and Founder at first described them, the leaven

which is to go on leavening the lump, till the whole be leavened; the tree which is to grow, till its branches spread over the whole face of the earth. And in fulfilling this their office, they will, if they are truly Christians, reckon no exertion, no privation, no sacrifice, too great. They are debtors to all men in virtue of their debt to Christ, and can never pay more than they owe. They have received vast benefits from the Christian benefactors of distant lands and past ages; they are bound to repay them to the men of their own time, and their own land, first; and then to the children of distant regions, and the sons of future ages. They have received a message full of grace and love, and must overflow with it, so that it may flow on to other men. They have been touched with fire from heaven, and must be a burning and a shining light upon earth. They have received the spirit of adoption by which they cry, Abba, Father, and are bound, like their Great Teacher, to do their Father's business.

Such considerations as these are often put forward when the preacher has it for his office to

move his hearers to acts of bounty for some special object of Christian zeal; some particular mode of Christian teaching, or some particular occasion of Christian charity. And perhaps it may be, that by hearing such views of our Christian condition thus pressed upon us for particular purposes, we come to have, as it were, a suspicious and defensive feeling regarding them. And yet such a feeling is really a result of the self-opinion and self-seeking of the human heart. For no Christian truth is more true than that which we have been inculcating, that the Christian is bound, by all ties of love and duty which can have any hold upon him, to make it a main business of his life to unfold and extend those provisions and institutions by which Christian teaching and a Christian spirit are diffused among men. And it will be a salutary employment of our thoughts, now that we have no special application of such truths hanging over us, and, as it were, distorting our minds, to consider, as a subject of general self-examination and self-monition, how far we have really accepted these truths into

our minds, and made them a part of our inner life: how far they are become in us principles of doing and of being, by which, when the occasion arrives, our purposes and actions will be directed?

It will be well to consider this: and when we do so, do we not, many of us, too easily and too plainly discern, how far we are from the full possession of this active, diffusive, Christianising Christianity? Even if we have thought seriously about matters of religion, about the commands of God and the ordinances by which we are to be drawn to him, have not our thoughts extended only to ourselves? Have not our views, of what was much and little in our Christian condition, been bounded by the application of Christian influences to our own souls? Instead of urging God's commands upon others, have we not thought it much if we ourselves tried to obey them? Instead of carrying the message of the Gospel to all that have ears to hear, have we not deemed it a great thing that we ourselves should listen to it? Instead of labouring to diffuse everywhere to all men the benefits of Christian institu-

tions, have we not been satisfied if we were willing in our own persons to use them? Instead of employing our labour, our time, our wealth, in extending and perpetuating established modes of religious benefit, have we not been content to live, so far as our religious life is concerned, upon the wealth of former ages, and to rest, for religious support, upon the things which they have established? It is, no doubt, really much, really a vast step, if we have applied religion to our own souls; if we have, each for ourselves, taken hold of the salvation of God: but there is yet more to be done. We are to look, not each on his own things alone, but also each on the things of others. And in proportion as we have really become children of God through Christ, we shall be zealous that all men should become, in that respect, our brethren, and should share with us in Christian privileges. If we have really made the first step in our Christian advance, we shall press forwards to make others. If we are full of the love and of the grace of God, we shall overflow and abound to other men. If we truly feel the privileges and

blessings of religious ordinances and institutions, we shall desire and seek to extend, to all men and to all times, the same blessings and the same privileges.

There is one way of looking at the matter, which, if we attend to it for a moment, will probably make many of us fear that we have not attained to the full measure of this desire to impart to all men our Christian wealth, which is the best evidence that we are really rich in Christian treasure. Let us suppose for a moment that those who have gone before us in this land had *not* done this. Let us suppose that the men of former times had not, by the dedication of their temporal wealth to religious purposes, established, for us, the means of religious instruction, religious worship, religious supports and consolations. Let us suppose that we had not received, as our inheritance from them, a land inlaid with the houses of God as with rich jewels, sounding with the voice of prayer and praise as with celestial music, occupied by hosts of ministers ready to teach every man, to exhort every man, to console every

man, as by heavenly messengers. Let us suppose that all religious institutions which the bountiful piety of former ages has established in the land were wanting; that all that points to heaven were absent, and that all that were present to our outward sense were of the earth, earthy. Let us suppose, this, and let us suppose, too, that we were such as we are, in our spiritual condition: that we had accepted, as truly and fully as we have (and may that, for each of us, be in all truth and fulness!), the Gospel of Christ; that we had received, as completely as we have, the adoption, and thereon were prepared, according to the measure of our filial condition, to cry out to God, Our Father! and to man, My Brother! that we had learned, as thoroughly as we have, that the riches of this world are worthless, except as the means of doing in the world what God would have us do; suppose, I say, that we were such Christians as we are, in a land void of the Christian establishments which we have inherited from former times, does it appear to us, on a faithful examination of ourselves, that our piety is warm and

earnest enough, our estimate of the value of earthly wealth sufficiently moderate, our wish to do good to the household of faith in all times sufficiently zealous, to make it likely that we should have in that case supplied this void? that we should have done that which our ancestors had left undone: that we should have provided for future generations what they have provided for us—Churches, and Christian Offices, and Christian Instruction, and the sway of Christian laws, and the hope of a national, as well as individual, progress in the school of Christ? We sometimes look upon our fathers in former ages as dark and ignorant, as narrow-minded and bigoted, as fierce and turbulent. But let us ask ourselves, whether we, however much more clear-sighted, more instructed, more large in our views, and liberal in our judgments, and humane and soft in our demeanour—whether we should have done, for the enlightening, and instructing, and humanising the present and all future times, what they did? We think of these rude forefathers of ours sometimes, it may be, with pity or contempt; but surely we

must exchange these emotions for reverence and gratitude, if we are compelled to judge, when we put the matter to ourselves, that they did more for religion, and knowledge, and universal charity, than, in their place, we should have done. And if we are thus compelled to deem that they were, in these things, superior to what we should have been, this conviction must surely humble and arouse us, when we find that we are thus forced to place ourselves below men whom we had placed so low in the scale of religious instruction. Sometimes, perhaps, we look upon the workings of their piety as lavish or misguided; and so, perhaps, in some cases they may have been. But yet it is not easy for us to be entitled to say that those men gave lavishly, who gave in proportion to their estimate of the value of religious blessings; and many of the appropriations of wealth to religious purposes in past ages, which the fancied wisdom of modern times would condemn as useless or mistaken, have been the source of precious benefits to mankind, which schemes, framed under the guidance of the wisdom of this

world, would never have produced. And thus there appears to be nothing in aught we may say, respecting the ignorance, or bigotry, or rudeness, or prodigality, or error, of these ancient benefactors of Christian communities, which can justly prevent our being abashed, as it were, in their presence, if, when we ask ourselves the question, we are compelled to confess that we are incapable of the like large and liberal works of piety; the like devotion of our substance, on fitting occasions, to the perpetual religious benefit of men.

I would desire, therefore, if through God's blessing it might be, to leave this thought impressed upon your minds, as one not to be called up only on great and peculiar occasions, and then dismissed, but as a principle of action, constantly ready to operate, and fit to guide the general scheme of your lives: that what has been done, in the times of the most liberal piety, by the most bountiful benefactors of the Churches of Christendom, was not more than it was fitting for them to do; and that we are not less bound, than they

were, to such acts. They and we form part, as we trust, of the true disciples of Christ: of that band whose office it is, in all ages, to draw men through Christ to God; to urge upon them the Christian faith, and hope, and love, which Christ has left among men as the vital principle of the world. They, our ancestors, have done their part; at any rate, not *more* than their part. How are we worthy of our vocation and office, if, with the advantage of their example, we are able to do so much less than they have done? If, in matters concerning men's souls, in which they were earnest and bountiful, we are cold and penurious, how are we worthy, I will not say, of our Heavenly Father, but even of our earthly fathers? How shall we show that we have truly drunk the waters of life out of the fountains which they hewed, if we are too parsimonious, or too inert even to keep the fountains in repair, and to carry on their waters wherever our brethren need the refreshing draught?

This thought, as I have said, I would wish to leave impressed upon your minds as a general prin-

ciple of action, which may stimulate and shape the conduct of all of us, according to our stations, and means, and opportunities, and the occasions which our times may bring. We shall find abundant room for all the activity and bounty which such a principle may inspire. However much the piety and liberality of our predecessors has done, it has still left us much to do. If they have provided religious ministration and instruction for us, and if that provision remains to us, there is an abundant and over-abundant multitude of others, to whom *we* may supply these blessings. If we are allowed to lean upon the past, there is a weighty future to which we may lend a supporting hand. If our own house of God remains to us unshaken and inviolate, there are still a vast crowd of men wandering in the highways and hedges without shelter and guidance. If we are allowed to say to our soul, with regard to religious provision, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years," we ought still to have our hearts open to the needs of those for whom such goods are not yet laid up, and who, except we provide for them,

will be in a condition of religious destitution, of which, for ourselves, we are troubled by no fear.

Christian Improvement.

[BISHOP BLOMFIELD.]

LET the most serious and zealous disciple of Christ consider what the Scriptures require of him in that character.; and he must perceive that he has still much to do. We are to love God with all our heart and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves. Which of us can pretend to say that he has attained to those degrees of piety and charity which correspond to these commands? Christians must forgive, freely and fully forgive, every one his brother their trespasses; must harbour no spark of malice or ill-will; must not revile again, but return kindness for injury—a blessing for a curse. Who can say that he has not yet much to do—many struggles to make against passion and temper—many prayers to urge for the grace of meekness—before he can form his disposition to this heavenly mould? Is there one amongst us who

thinks so much as he ought of the comparative importance of soul and body, of time and eternity? Are we satisfied in our consciences, that we are engaged as earnestly and heartily as we ought to be, in working out our own salvation? Is there no trifling, no wasting nor abusing the precious time which the Lord gives us for that work? Are none of our talents and opportunities misemployed upon frivolous pursuits, which might be turned to much better account in improving the state of our souls? Is there no Lord's-day neglected, no means of grace refused or unimproved? Have we attained to such a heavenly state of mind, that we look to God in everything we say or do? Do we understand our peculiar temptations, and the most effectual means of resisting them? and is it our chief study and delight, as members of the great family of Christ, to do all the good we can in the world, for the honour and glory of God? Surely, in some one or other of these particulars, the very best and most considerate of us all may find room for amendment, at any moment of our lives.

Let me then earnestly impress upon you the necessity of putting to yourselves the questions—Am I in an improving state? Am I conscious of a daily progress and advancement in piety and godliness? Have I diligently sought for the assistance of God's grace, and felt the effects of it in the increase of faith, hope, and charity? These are trying questions, and they must be answered. If your spiritual condition be not progressively better, it is absolutely worse; for every additional hour of inactivity and neglect, of talents uncultivated or misemployed, adds to the number of your sins, and places you still further from that state of grace and hope, into which you can be brought only by much perseverance and labour.

In conducting that self-examination by which these questions may be determined, we must beware of self-deceit and self-righteousness. We must not compare ourselves with other men, nor judge of our religious character by the standard of the world's opinions or practices; but we must compare our feelings and habits at different points of our career, and determine whether any advance

has been made towards Christian perfection. And then, if we have the happiness of reflecting, that by God's grace we have been enabled to take one step forwards in the path of eternal life; if we have mastered one sin, shaken off one evil habit, acquired a livelier relish for heavenly things, and are more intimately acquainted with the real nature of our own sinfulness, and of God's mercies in Jesus Christ, let us be thankful, but not presuming; encouraged, but not lifted up; excited to fresh diligence, not soothed into a groundless and pernicious security. Our language, in every stage of improvement, will be, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. xv. 10): I have "laboured more abundantly" than once I did; "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;" and let me continue to show that "I receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Cor. vi. 1.)

Sunshine and Cloud.

[AUGUSTUS HARE.]

"The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee."—NUMBERS vi. 25.

YOU all know the difference of feel there is be-between a sunshiny and a cloudy day. The real heat may be the same; nay, the cloudy may be warmer than the sunshiny: in point of fact, we know it often is; for we often have bright sunshine in the clear frosty days of winter, and dull clouds in the middle of summer. But though the real heat may be the same on both days—though the thermometer, as it is called, or the glass which measures heat, may tell us that the cloudy day is the warmer of the two—yet to our feelings it may be quite the contrary. There is something so enlivening in the sun, that I have often known persons come in from a walk on a bright winter's day, and speak of it as very pleasant; while the same person, on a damp cloudy evening in July, would be the first, perhaps, to shiver, and to wish for a fire. Now, the same dif-

ference which it makes to a man's body, whether the sun is shining upon him, the same difference does it make to his soul, whether God's face is shining on him or no. Let God's face shine on the soul, it walks in the brightest sunshine: let God veil his face, and cloud it over, the soul feels chilled, and is discomforted. Thus it is written, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." (Psalm xxx. 7.) Think not that this is a small blessing. I said that we often feel the cold on a sunshiny day in winter, less than on a cloudy day in summer. Now, is not something answering to this often met with in the world? Do we not see many a man there disquieted and ill at ease in the midst of riches and luxuries, while his poor neighbour, who lives in some sorry hovel, may look always cheerful and contented? What is this difference owing to? Not to the health and strength of the poor man—for he may be old, and often a sufferer from cold and wet, and he cannot afford to buy himself the little comforts proper for his years and infirmities. The rich man, on the other hand, may be still young; his disease, if it can be called

one, is more of the mind than of the body; he can consult the best physicians; he can travel from place to place in search of pleasure; he is not obliged to deny himself any one earthly thing necessary to his ease and enjoyment. Yet, with all this—in spite of his youth and his riches, and his having no outward ailment, and his possessing every comfort and luxury that heart could wish for—he may be always growling and grumbling, while the dweller in the old hovel, with the pinching frost of poverty and age, and sometimes sickness to boot, sharp upon him, may be ever making the best of his condition, and finding out something or other in it to thank God for. This is no mere dream of what might be. Those who mix much with the rich and with the poor, may see instances such as I have been describing, of discontented rich men, and contented poor men, in every part of the land. What then, I ask, is this difference owing to? To what cause must we trace the gloomy spirit of the one, who has every worldly good to satisfy him, and the blithe-hearted contentedness of the other, whose lot in

the world's eyes is so hard and wretched? The cause is simply this—that the poor man I have been speaking of (for what I have said is true only of such) has led a Christian life, or at least has turned to God in earnest, and repented of his sins betimes; and so God has allowed his face to shine upon him, and to cheer him: while his rich neighbour has been led astray by the deceitfulness of riches, and has been so taken up with his pleasures, or with the cares which riches brings with it, that he could not spare time to think about God. He has turned his face away from God, therefore God has turned away his face from him, and left him in clouds and heaviness. O! that you might but know and feel the joy and gladness which the light of God's face can shed on the soul of the true Christian! Wheresoever that shines, it cheers and warms, and even gilds and beautifies the lowest and meanest lot. Where that is wanting, earthly wealth and grandeur can no more make amends for it, than the blaze of lamps and the glare of torches could have made amends for the absence of the sun, during those

three dismal days of Egyptian darkness, when the people, who had disobeyed the voice of the Lord, were plagued with that thick darkness, which, Moses tells us, "could be felt."

Our Ancestry in the Church.*

[ROBINSON.]

THE same feelings which are represented by the prophet in my text (Isaiah lxiv. 11), as belonging to the *earthly* Israel, in their recollections of the place which God had chosen, and which had been so hallowed by the exhibition of his power and goodness, should belong to *us*, with far greater intensity and reality of interest, as we are a Christian Church, visited with the abundant blessings of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

1. For these houses of God, in which it is our high privilege to worship his name, and to enjoy his presence, are, no less than the Temple of Jerusalem, *holy to the Lord*. For the time is come

* Delivered at St Mary's, Leicester.

which Malachi foretold, when "in every place incense should be offered to his name, and a pure offering" (Mal. i. 11); the hour of which the Saviour spoke, when "neither in the mountain of Samaria, nor yet at Jerusalem alone, should men worship the Father; but when the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth." (John iv. 21, 23.) And therefore, under the larger dispensation of the covenant of mercy, each one of these sacred buildings, the humblest as well as the more magnificent, which the piety of man dedicates to the service of the Most High, succeeds to the full inheritance of that awful sanctity which once belonged exclusively to the Jewish sanctuary. The presence of the Redeemer Himself ("the Lord of the Temple") (Mal. iii. 1) is mercifully promised: "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) And the promise is fulfilled. Your own hearts will bear me witness. The Saviour is present with us in these our solemn services. He is *here*, not in *the cloud* that filled the temple,

...e the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear
...d his commandments for this is the whole
... of man

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

ECCLESIASTES XII 13, 14.

EDINBURGH: PRINTED BY J. [illegible]

delights to invest even the material habitation with some portion of those attributes which are enshrined within. And so it is with the heart of the true Christian. Let him once be admitted to the blessedness of communion with God in the congregation of his saints, let him see there but a part of his glory, and partake there, with the fellow-heirs of the same inheritance, the light of his countenance, in whose "presence there is fulness of joy" (Psalm xvi. 11); and then hear the rapturous, yet humble, expressions of his admiring and grateful heart: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." (Psalm lxxxiv. 1–4.) And he will delight to add, according to the measure of his power, *external beauty* to the place around which his affections are so gathered.

He will rejoice when he is permitted to testify to others, by such oblations of affection all the heart yearns to express of gratitude and lov. , others also may come and "see the fair beauty o the Lord, and visit his temple." (Psalm xxvii. 4.) No offering is too costly for the loving heart to make. No offering is too small for the object of that love to receive. For, observe, it is love alone that makes it acceptable to God; and "we love Hir only because He first loved us." (1 John iv. 1C It is only a devout appreciation of his mercy ourselves that makes his house *beautiful*, as it only his presence that makes it *holy*.

3. But this is not all. Beyond this individ feeling of personal gratitude as the ground of our attachment, we have other associations of affectionate and holy LOVE which we cannot separate from our hearts. We have *an ancestry* in the Church of God—an ancestry of remote and venerable antiquity—of which the material building in which we worship should be to ourselves, and to succeeding generations, the imperishable memorial. "In this holy and beautiful house *our*

thers praised God." And if the faithful of Israel nted with pious gratitude the illustrious names saints who, having served God in their generation, had fallen asleep in Him; if the Lord Himself, in marked approval of this feeling, gave to it the high authority of his own peculiar designation, as "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" surely it becomes to whom the same covenant of grace is ratified the accomplishment of the one great Sacrifice all, to remember, with equal reverence, those have gone before us in the profession of *our Christian faith*, and are now inheriting the promises. Their names and their examples are part of our inheritance. They are ours by the communion of saints; by a brotherhood that bears the stamp and seal of death and immortality; by a succession that never can be broken. Apostles, and confessors, and martyrs, and saints of other ages, who lived and died in faith, are *our fathers;* and we do well to remember them with filial love, as members, together with them, of "the great family in heaven and earth." (Eph. iii. 15.)

Life has no Infallible Teach

[ARNOLD.]

MEN crave a general rule for their guidance at under all circumstances; whereas life is a consta. us to consider how far one general rule, in the case before us, is modified by another, or where one be applied, and where another. To separate humil. idolatry, conscience from presumption, is often an a. task: to different persons, there is a different besetting si, so it is under different circumstances, and at ere. Every day does the seaman, on a voyage, take his to know whereabouts he is; he compares his position charts; he considers the direction of the wind, and the the current or tide; and from all these together, he judges on which side his danger lies, on what course he should steer, how much sail he may venture to carry. This is an image of our own condition: we cannot have a general rule to tell us where we should follow others, and where we must differ from them; to say what is modesty, and what is indolence; what is a proper deference to others, and what is a trusting in man so far, that it becomes a want of trust in God. Only, we are sure that these are points which we must decide for ourselves: the human will must be free, so far as other men are concerned. If we say that we will implicitly trust others,

vision, which no one could have made for our own choice as to the principle of our ice we each of us, and no one else in all ver at the judgment-seat of God. Only, our comfort, that, for our conduct in so as that of life, amidst so many conflicting courting our adherence to it—amidst such a cumstances without, and of feelings within, notwithstanding, our condition for all eternity —we shall be judged, not by erring man, not by the conscience, but by the all-wise and all-right- ith him, after all, even in the very courts of his h, we yet, in one sense, must each of us live alone. acious aid, given to our own individual souls, and ing our own individual wills, depends the character r life here and for ever. *Trusting to Him, praying to Him, we shall then make use of all the means that his goodness has provided for us; we shall ask counsel of friends; we shall listen to teachers; we shall delight to be in the company of God's people, of one mind and of one voice with the good and wise of every generation; we shall be afraid of leaning too much to our own understanding, knowing how it is encompassed with error; but knowing that other men are encompassed with error also, and that we, and not they, must answer for our choice before Christ's judgment, we must, in the last resort, if our conscience and sense of truth cannot be*

persuaded that other men speak accordin
must follow our own inward convictions,
were to follow the contrary.

